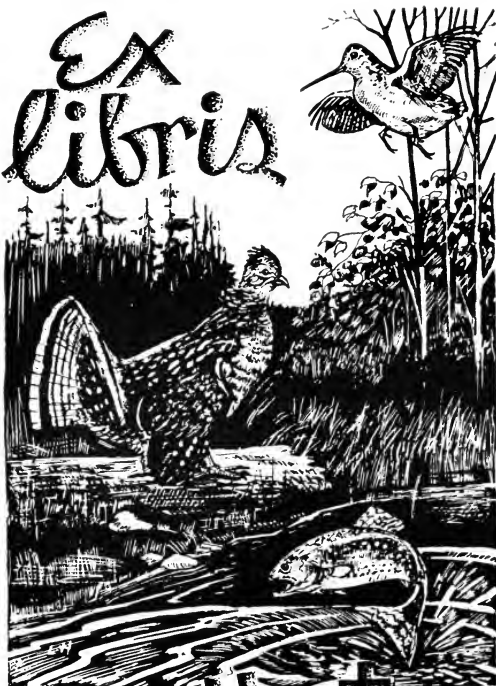




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AN ANGLER'S SEASON

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JAMES STEWART, OUR GUIDE AND FRIEND.

John Currie.

AN ANGLER'S SEASON

Wilson BY
W. EARL HODGSON

AUTHOR OF 'TROUT FISHING,' 'SALMON FISHING,'
AND 'HOW TO FISH'



LONDON
ADAM AND CHARLES BLACK
1909

SH609
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TO
LADY ST. HELIER
IN
HAPPY REMEMBRANCE

Spring 1909.

M842120

PREFATORY NOTE

"An Angler's Season" implies a season's angling; and that, in these industrious days, may seem to call for an apology. Perhaps an explanation will suffice. It is that if you are a scribe you must do as editors will do with you. You may wish, for example, to shed light on politics; but will they encourage you? That depends upon where you chance to be dwelling. Political discourses writ in the Highlands are not in active demand. Discourses on Angling are. The Editor of "The Times" invited articles to be sent at regular intervals throughout the season; the Editor of "The Nation" and the Editor of "The Evening Standard" wished to have articles now and then. What could one do but go fishing with something like professional

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regularity? That was necessary in order that the papers should be as real and fresh as one could make them. Soon I found that the subject-matter was more than sufficient for the articles I had been asked to write. Therefore I wrote others, which the Editors of "The Nineteenth Century," "The Scotsman," and "The Daily Mail" were good enough to publish. The fact is, I had thought of gathering materials out of which eventually to conjure a mirage of a season. This volume is the outcome of the experiment. I have carefully revised the papers, discarding a good many passages, re-writing many others, and in many places adding matter wholly new. In particular, it may be mentioned that the closing chapter, narrating what may perhaps be considered an extraordinary adventure, and the story, in the July chapter, of how Haxton came to Atholl, are now published for the first time.

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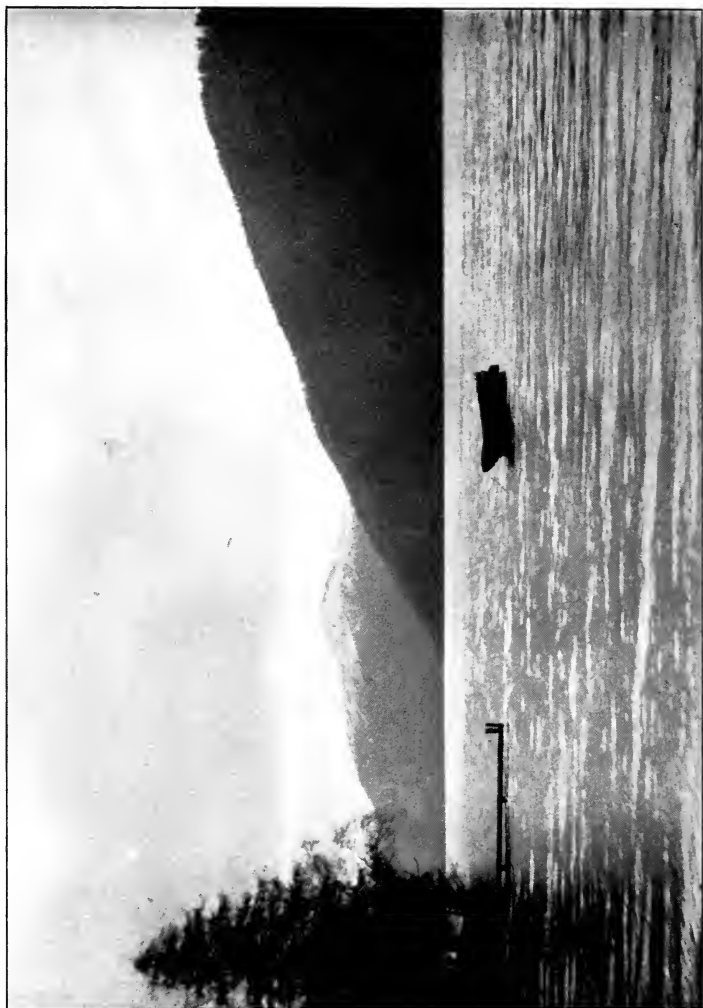
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C. Dawson.

LOCH TAY.

AN ANGLER'S SEASON

CHAPTER I

JANUARY

At Dawn of the Opening Day—On the way to a Famous Loch—Speculations—The Scene at Kenmore—A Picturesque Libation—Loch Tay Traces—Afloat—A Salmon on—Captured—Another Battle—Trolling-Rods: a Technical Problem—Suggested Solution—Loch Lures—Playing a Salmon—What “Minnows” Are—Which is the Right One?

“THIS is just as good a First Day as the Twelfth!” exclaimed Master Lindesay, one of my host’s two sons. He meant that it was not less joyously exciting. A fly bearing the heavily-coated figure of a man and the long case of a salmon-rod had just, in the dim dawn, shot in advance of our carriage. At that unfamiliar hour, in the middle of winter, it was novel and stimulating to be off to a sport which is

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commonly associated with the comfortable leisure of spring and summer. How eager were our speculations! The Tay, which runs by the side of the road to Kenmore, had risen three feet in the night. Was this from rain or from a melting of snow on the mountains? If the flood was merely or mainly the result of a thaw, it would be no advantage: salmon do not move much, and seldom take a bait, in snow-broth. On the other hand, if the flood was from rain, it would be highly opportune; and Master Hubert had heard rain lashing against his window all through the night. My host, more cautious in conjecture than either of the lads, was not sure that we should find Loch Tay above the ordinary level. It might be, he said, that the flood had come from Glenlyon. He was not far wrong. When we reached the loch, within half-an-hour of the discussion, it was found to be not more than two inches higher than it had been during the frost; the extra yard of water in the river was due to a

rise of the Lyon. The Lyon, indeed, has become rather a sore subject in the upper part of the Tay valley. Floods in it are more frequent and heavier than they are in the streams which feed the loch ; they carry much sand and gravel ; a few years ago the silt began to form a barrier across the Tay, just above the place at which the tumultuous tributary joins the river ; and the barrier is now so considerable that many of the up-running salmon, instead of troubling to pass it, go into the Lyon. Thus, it is said, that stream is benefiting to the detriment of the loch. Not many years ago a fish of 18 lb. was a large one for the Lyon ; nowadays much heavier fish, salmon nearly twice that weight, are not uncommon.

The square in front of the hotel at Kenmore presented a bustling scene. One grave gentleman, who had come from London the night before, had his rod already up, and was solemnly ensuring good luck by breaking a bottle of whisky on the butt. Gillies were putting up the

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rods of anglers just arrived. Everybody was asking important questions which nobody had time to answer. Only, any one who dared to think of fishing with a trace of gut was unanimously rebuked by the gillies. Gut, they said, might do for ordinary salmon ; but it would not do for the salmon of Loch Tay. You needed a wire trace there. This was horrible news to some anglers ; but they were speedily reassured when the gillies showed samples of the metallic trace. The wire was not nearly so clumsy as had been imagined ; indeed, it was thinner than salmon gut, and almost as pliable. The only objection that could be taken was that each of the traces had a swivel at the end, and that when the phantom minnow was put on the swivel was just above its nose. "It must be a yokel of a fish that would take that," said Master Hubert, doubtfully, and still anxious to be allowed his trace of gut.

Oddly enough, this doubter was the first to be undeceived. He and his

brother went off in one boat ; their father and I followed immediately in the wake. Tradition has it that, as there is often a long time between bites, it is well to have some subsidiary pastime while trolling on Loch Tay. Venerable gentlemen, much wrapped in rugs, and sometimes with hot-water bottles at their feet, favour novel-reading. The lads, to keep themselves warm and their minds sufficiently engaged, were playing picquet. Suddenly, not more than twenty-five minutes after setting out upon the water, one of their two gillies shouted, "There he is!" Both anglers sprang to their feet, and in a minute or so, after they had fallen over thwarts and been otherwise in some little disorder, we beheld Hubert's rod erect, or as nearly so as a beautiful bend of the upper half permitted. He had a salmon on.

The fish was no yokel ; at any rate, he did all that could be done to be free. Now and then he rushed towards the boat, seemingly perceiving that, the line being loose, he might have a chance of ejecting

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the hooks ; anon he would bolt, with great valour, in order to break the barbed-wire entanglement ; through the sough of the west wind, as he fled, we heard the whirr of the reel. By and by he came at intervals to the surface, and smote the water with his tail. This was really a grand sight. The salmon's lashings of the loch made even the spray-tipped waves seem small.

All this time, of course, as our tackle would have gone to the bottom had we stopped, our own boat had been moving on ; but before we were too far off to see or hear we knew that the fish was captured. There had been an upward flash as of silver at the side of the boat, which indicated gaffing, followed by a waving of caps and jubilant shouts.

Just beyond the Otter's Rocks, about three miles up the loch on the south shore, we came upon another spectacle of the same kind. A middle-aged gentleman was battling with a salmon. He was the cause of some discussion in our

own boat. When the salmon dashed away, down went the rod until the tip almost touched the water. One of our gillies having mentioned the angler's name, which was that of a man highly respected in the craft, I myself was disposed to hold that the fish must be one of exceptional majesty, perhaps a thirty-pounder; but my host would have none of this.

"Even if he were forty pounds," said he, "the fellow should keep his rod up. The truth is, he's not a fisher!"

The struggle was still raging as long as we could see; and our diverse theories as to why that was so led to a widening of conflict. Why was neither of ourselves having a run?

"It's on accoont o' thae rods," said the elder gillie, William Macfarlane. "Fly-rods! Ye canna' expec' a fush if ye troll wi' a fly-rod. Ye need a vera stiff rod for trollin'."

My friend was disposed to flout the notion. How did William make that

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out ? he asked. Our minnows, when last seen, had been spinning beautifully.

"I dinna' ken the explanation," answered William stoutly ; " but I ken what I ha'e said is fact. Last spring I was fushin' wi' an Airmy gentleman. He began wi' a fly-rod, just like your ain, and fushed wi't for three days, and didna' get a rug. Then, on my advice, he tried a trollin'-rod, a stiff rod, and got at least ae salmon every day."

"Just luck," said my friend. "I can understand that a fly-rod, being whippy, may not hook a fish so neatly as a trolling-rod ; but you don't mean to tell me that a minnow attached to a fly-rod is less attractive than a minnow attached to a trolling-rod ?"

"I do mean to tell ye that," said William ; and he told his notion over again with some heat. He didna' ken why it was, but was quite certain, that a minnow managed by a fly-rod was not so taking as a minnow managed by a trolling-rod.

I myself was, and am, disposed towards William's opinion. Attached to either rod, a minnow will spin well enough ; but otherwise the action of the minnow will not be the same in each case. The fly-rod bends to the wind, and to the stroke of the oar, and to the motion of the boat on rolling waves ; the other rod does not bend so much. Thus the minnow which is attached to a trolling-rod will go through the water with a motion more nearly regular than that of the minnow which is attached to a fly-rod. Therefore the question comes to be, Is a regular motion of a minnow more attractive to fish than an irregular motion ? There is reason for believing that it is. On Lochleven one June day two minnows were put out between-drifts. One was attached to a fly-rod ; the other was attached to no rod at all, but only to a reel. During the day a perch was taken on the minnow which was attached to the rod ; two perches and seven trout were taken on the minnow which was attached

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to the reel only. Besides, my host himself gave evidence in favour of William's doctrine. He mentioned that he had repeatedly tried for salmon in the Tay with a lure spun directly from a reel, and had on every occasion hooked more fish than had been hooked on a similar lure spun from a rod in the same boat. While debating with William he did not perceive that such incidents as those I have mentioned go to show that a rigid attachment of the line is better than a pliable attachment, and that, therefore, a stiff or stiffish rod is better than a whippy one.

The opening day was spent mainly in contention over the ways and means of catching salmon. Our boat was "clean" when we were back to the landing-stage. It had, however, been a very pleasant day; and when we entered our hotel, soon after dusk, salmon displayed in the hall, together with tidings from other quarters of the waterside, showed that, despite the barrier at the mouth of the Lyon,

there were still plenty of fine fish in Loch Tay.

At a time when it is not always easy to be sufficiently warm within-doors one naturally thinks with a shiver of "spring" salmon-fishing, which begins before winter is half over. The reality is less trying than the imagination. Even amid wind and frost and snow, elation of the spirit at the chance of sport so animates the body that the discomfort is astonishingly small. How can you have cold feet, or be conscious of them, when a thirty-pounder may come on at any moment? Note the phrasing, please. You would not speak of a trout "coming on," because when a trout comes at a fly or other lure you strike, and it is the strike that takes him on; but there is no other phrase for the event in salmon-fishing. This is especially true if it is a loch, rather than a river, you are on. Not infrequently you raise a salmon when fishing for trout on a loch;

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but if it is for salmon exclusively you are trying there, you do not fish with fly. Very early in the year loch salmon, it would seem, either do not look at flies or look at them only to let them alone. Thus some sunken bait called a minnow is practically the only lure that is used on lochs. Fifty or sixty yards off, it spins in the wake of the rowed boat ; the rod lies over the stern ; you sit watching for the violent bending of the top-piece which shall indicate that a fish has been hooked. Crude work ? Well, it certainly leaves the angler with less initiative than he has in trout-fishing ; but it leads to his having plenty to do.

One has to be alert when there is a salmon on. As salmon in general have no experience in warfare with man and his tackle, we can hardly look upon the actions of the hooked fish as having any definite design ; but, as has been suggested in our account of the first capture on the opening day, some of the actions do seem to be less haphazard than

purposeful. If the fish bolts far enough he will empty the reel and break away. If he rushes towards the boat the line will become loose, and then he has a chance to be rid of the hooks. If the fish leaps, the angler is apt to "tighten on him" while in the air, and in that case the gear will probably snap when the salmon falls into the water. One or another of these crises, or all of them, may be expected when a fish comes on. Playing a salmon is a task that calls for nerve and skill.

Besides, whilst the angler has but little to do with the hooking of a fish, it behoves him to know what lure is most likely to be attractive. "Minnow" covers a multitude of commodities. In fact, in spring salmon-fishing the most notable thing that is not a "minnow" is the minnow itself. A gudgeon is a "minnow"; so is a small dace; so, if one chances, illicitly, to be handy, is a small trout; so is each of innumerable "phantoms," "Devons," and other mechanisms; the real minnow is too

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small for the time of the year. On lakes, as a rule, our list of lures to be chosen from is curtailed by the exclusion of the natural baits. Gudgeon, dace, and other fish of that class would be constantly snapped at by trout, which are not yet in season. To an angler who with natural bait seeks salmon early in the year, brown-trout are as much a nuisance as salmon-parr will be when he casts for brown-trout in April or in May. They seize and destroy tit-bits meant for their betters. Thus we are obliged to choose one of the mechanisms. Which is it to be?

One faces the question humbly.

There is, for example, a very cogent-looking proposition which was submitted on the night of the opening on Loch Tay by Mr. Peter Currie, the cheery master of the hotel at Kenmore. A sportsman in the neighbourhood, said Mr. Currie, kept a convincing record. Whenever he caught a salmon he carved on his walking-stick an image of the successful

minnow. The strange chronicle, extending over a good many years, showed that of all the salmon taken from Loch Tay, 75 per cent were lured by a phantom with a golden belly and a blue back. This statement seemed so clearly conclusive that nobody called it in question at the time; but now a doubt occurs. Did the sportsman give an equal chance to each of the variants of the phantom? It is extremely improbable that he did. Naturally he would be biased in favour of the pattern which, whether from luck or for some definite reason, took the lead early in the progress of his experiment, and would give it unduly frequent opportunities.

Still, we are not altogether without positive knowledge as regards the disposition of salmon towards lures. In certain lakes, it has been found, salmon take phantoms of a clay-red hue more eagerly than any others; these lakes hold char, which are markedly of that colour. Therefore it is not unreasonable

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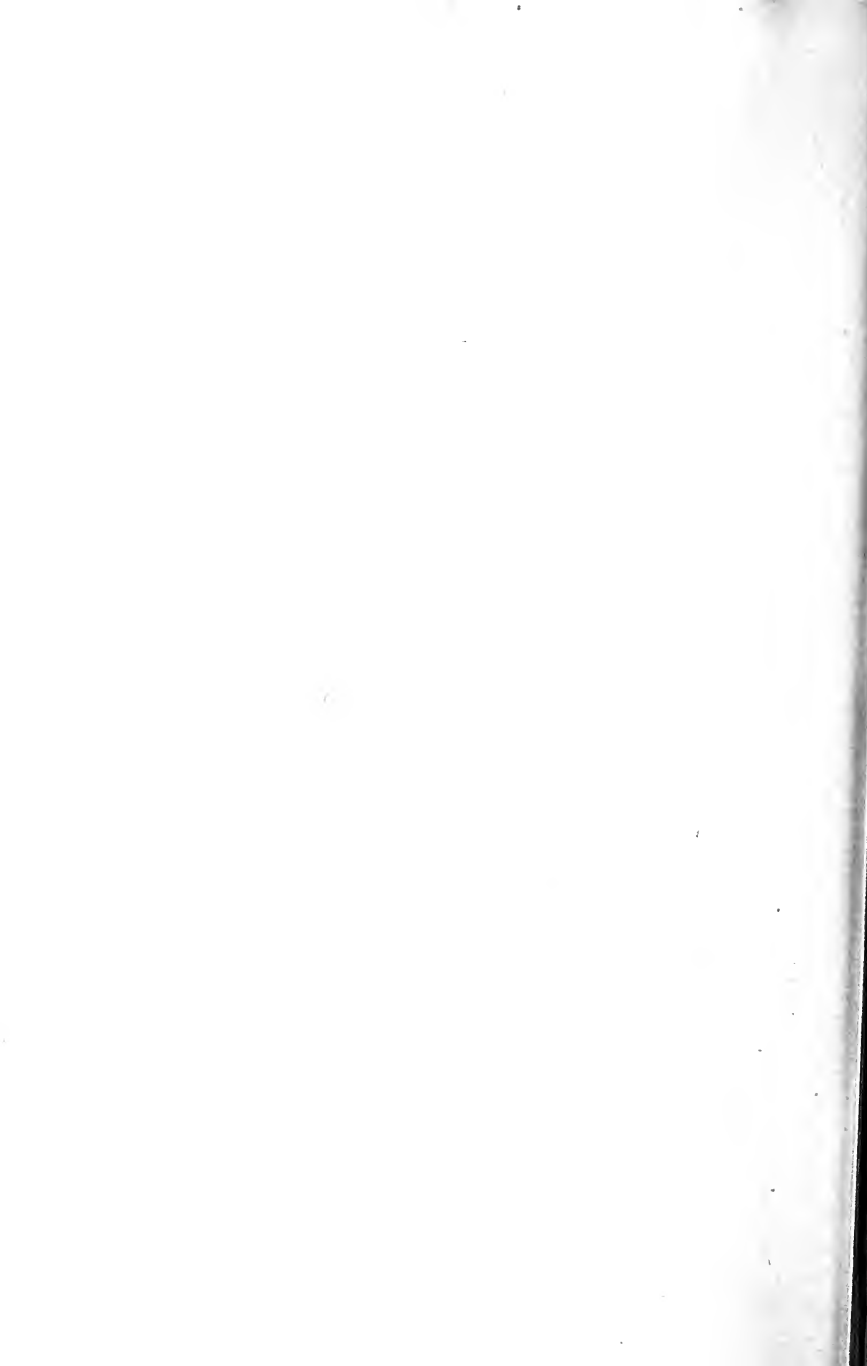
to infer, particularly, that the fish take the phantom to be a char, and, generally, that the lure which most closely resembles some choice creature indigenous to a water is the lure most likely to succeed.

The angler on Loch Tay who was struggling with a salmon as we passed had something to say about the comments of my companion. In a letter, signed "Struan," to the Editor of *The Scotsman*, he explained that "several times, when within 10 feet of the boat, the fish made a straight dive 20 or 30 feet towards the bottom." "At such a moment," he added, "what folly to hold the rod in the air! The proof that the fish was properly handled is the fact that a lively sixteen-pounder was gaffed in less than fifteen minutes." Then, on the morning of the first day of this year I received a letter as follows :—



THE LYON (page 10).

W. L. Wood, junior.



DEAR SIR,

In view of the early opening of next salmon season, I have much pleasure in enclosing herewith, with compliments, one or two of the new Telarana Nova salmon casts and traces. By a strange coincidence, the first performance of Telarana Nova was witnessed by yourself on Loch Tay on the opening day of last season, and was most unfavourably criticised in *The Scotsman*.

With the compliments of the season,

I am, yours very truly,

WM. ROBERTSON.

The packet contained three traces and three casts, showing the grades of fineness. The stoutest is at least as thin as a wire trace; all of them are without knots, hardly to be seen when in the water, and of remarkable strength. To the eye and the touch the material seemed to be very finely-plaited gut. Answering a question on that point, Mr. Robertson wrote :

Telarana Nova, I believe, is a product of the silkworm prepared in some secret manner. It has all the virtues and none of the faults of single gut of equal weight, and has even been used on the Tweed in its finest size for fishing with the dry fly.

CHAPTER II

FEBRUARY

Trout-Fishing—Not much Scope for Luck—*The Edinburgh Review's* Theory of Flies—Eyesight of Man and That of the Trout—A Case in Point—Male and Female Insects—Some Particular Fly Always Preferred—The Southern School of Anglers—Strange Doings in Hampshire—An Unfortunate Custom of the Scots—The Fruitfulness of Knowledge.

TROUT-FISHING, in which we shall soon be engaged, is a craft much subtler than salmon-fishing. It affords illustration of Pope's teaching that all chance is "direction which thou canst not see." The poet must have been a fly-fisher. He could never have arrived at such a thought by playing or by watching billiards. That is a pastime in connexion with which there is real need for the word "fluke." To be sure, any erratic shot at billiards,

whether scoring or a failure, falls into the scope of Pope's maxim ; but in many cases the result is so astonishingly unexpected that neither player nor onlooker is tempted to search for the unseen and involuntary direction. The incidents of golf, in a less complex way, are similar. Your opponent, howsoever sweet of temper, exclaims "Fluke !" to himself, if not to you, when you take a short hole in one from the tee. He believes what he says, too. On reflection he would admit that, as you aimed at the hole, you are not without cause for pride ; but he would not admit that luck made no contribution to your success. You do not suffer such obloquy in fly-fishing. If you catch many trout, you are acknowledged to be a skilled hand ; if on a good day you catch none, or only a few, you are taken to be a duffer. Any one, even if he be a metaphysician, may say "Good luck !" on seeing you set out for stream or lake ; but no one would mention luck on beholding your basket well plenished in

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the evening. Instinctively it is assumed that what is called chance has but little to do with fly-fishing. Is that a mistake? One must perceive that in fishing there really are incidents which could hardly be estimated without reference to the notion which the word "fluke" expresses. For example, when you raise and play and capture a particularly fine trout in a lake, it is not to be denied that luck has helped you. You did not know that the fish was just below where your cast fell, and in that respect you were undoubtedly a favourite of fortune. Similarly, you may choose the very fly for which the trout are on the outlook, and obviously you are rightly to be considered lucky if your choice has been at random. These possibilities, however, seem to measure the scope of flukes, and they are comparatively unimportant. Chance really does play but a small part in trout-fishing.

That, it would seem, is chief among the causes why the sport is so attractive.

The experiences of two or three seasons are sufficient to make any observant person perceive that the relations of the trout to the flies are at all times governed by natural laws. Are the fish not rising? There is a reason. Are they rising very well? There is a reason. In either case the reason is theoretically ascertainable. There is never any element of freakishness in the conduct of the trout.

These statements have been denied by men entitled to speak as with authority. See, for example, what is said on Angling in the 1908 May number of *The Edinburgh Review*. It is argued that your box or book cannot usefully hold flies of more than a few patterns. The few are a variable number, ranging from half-a-dozen to three dozen; while even the longest list represents only a small selection of the insects on which trout feed. This is an assurance that a lure, to be successful, does not need to be particularly like the insect on which the trout are feeding. The authorities, it is true, make exception in

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the case of the Mayfly, which is of various hues and sizes, and is imitated with exceeding care, and in the cases of the March Brown and the Alder, which also are honoured by elaborately studious effigies; but they are not exacting as to the size or the tints of lures in imitation of the smaller insects. The notion is that the small flies are sufficiently similar to warrant the belief that each of the standard patterns will represent a good many insects effectively.

Now, it is worth noting that the lures which are made scrupulously according to the natural models are large. They represent insects which are easily seen on the water or in the air. Their shapes and colours are readily manifest to the human eye. Many of the other insects are either so elusive in their colours or so small that they are apt to escape the notice of the angler. Thus it seems possible that the general derogation of the belief that you should have lures according to many patterns is based on the assumption

that about insects which the angler does not see definitely the fish are equally at a loss.

This assumption, that the eyesight of man and that of the trout are similar, is too easy-going to be accepted in confidence. It is disproved by experience such as must have fallen to the lot of all men who have fished in earnest. Who has not at least once found the trout rising so persistently at some particular lure that by and by it became tattered beyond recognition? That this does happen, and not infrequently, is no doubt the origin of the saying, common on many streams, "Never change a fly while the fish are taking it." I myself once found a Saltoun, after the wings had been torn off and only the black body remained, enticing the trout as rapidly as it could be cast upon the water. It may be thought that, as a lure without wings is not the same thing as a lure with wings, whilst the trout rose at the Saltoun in either state with great eagerness, this testimony proves

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too much. Does it? If either of the other flies on the cast at the same time had been as attractive as the Saltoun I should perceive that it did ; but the other lures were of no avail at all, and one of them was a Greenwell, which has a general resemblance to a Saltoun. That day it was a Saltoun that the trout wanted ; they rose at it with extraordinary avidity ; and when it was within view they would take no other lure. Beyond being obliged to think that the fat black busking of the hook made the lure resemble something in nature for which the trout were foraging, it seems impossible to tell why the fly did just as well without wings as it had done with them ; but who shall deny that the incident was a proof that trout discriminate ?

It was not an exceptional incident. There are innumerable analogies. Occasionally you have no sport, or only a rise now and then, for hours ; and you look at the sky, and see it drear, or at the flies, and suspect that the

droppers, instead of standing out, are in limp contact with the cast; then, without much hope, you put on another set, and from that moment you have trout after trout as quickly as you can ply! This may befall when, so far as can be seen, there is no great rise of insects. What is the cause? It is simply that you have found a lure representing an insect on which the fish are feeding or are willing to feed. The trout seem to have lost discretion. On ordinary days you approach them with much care, crouching or otherwise out of sight; but now, so eager are they to snap at what you offer, they seem not to heed your presence, and sometimes rush at the lure when it is within three yards of your feet. Now and then this happens amid conditions of weather that do not appear to be good. With an exception to be noticed in our April chapter and another to be discussed in May, it is invariably, as far as I have had experience, a lure of definite pattern that brings about the wonderful

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sport. Trout even distinguish between the sex of the insects strewn upon or in the water, sometimes, for example, preferring the male March Brown to the female, or the female to the male; and in the colours of wings and bodies of lures, from the largest to the smallest, there are gradations which they see and act upon.

It is not implied that it is impossible to catch fish with lures which are not precisely like the insects wanted at the moment. That is possible, and often happens; but when it does happen it tempts the angler to an erroneous conclusion. It seems to bear out the notion that one lure is as good or nearly as good as another; but the seeming is illusory. If the angler had on his cast the exactly opportune fly, he would raise but few fish, if any, at either of the others. When they cannot see a better, trout will occasionally take a fly that is not quite what they want; but when they do see a better, that is the only fly which really interests them.

Why, then, should we set a limit, voluntarily or under authority, to the number of patterns?

Public opinion on the subject, even though it is led by Sir Edward Grey, a first-class man alike on the riverside and at the Foreign Office, is not a sufficient inducement. The deceptive nature of its influence has been neatly brought into the light by a thinker of famed lucidity. "A thousand men with fishing-rods," says Mr. Mallock in his *Critical Examination of Socialism*, "might meet in an inn parlour and vote that such and such flies were sufficient to attract trout. But it lies with the trout to determine whether or no he will rise to them. It is a question, not of what the fishermen think, but of what the trout thinks; and the fishermen's thoughts are effective only when they coincide with the trout's." One fears that *The Edinburgh Review*, published in London, is writ by grave and reverend seniors studying the trout-streams, when these are their theme,

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from arm-chairs at the windows of the Reform Club. I much prefer the method of *The Quarterly*, which, when reviewing a fellow's book, chuckles quietly, in a genial Tory way, over the passages which please, and makes no empirical protest when you lead it out of its depth.

At the same time, one has to take note of another proposition. It is to the effect that, even if the belief in a few patterns as a sufficient basis for the hope of the best possible sport has to be abandoned, a limit is still desirable. The pleasure of angling, it will be said, lies less in catching trout than in casting at them amid beautiful scenes; more than a few patterns lead to perplexity; besides, as the stock must be preserved, it is not well to take as many trout as possible.

This is not part of an imaginary conversation. It is what certain eminent anglers sometimes say and always write. It cannot be an affectation; but it is certainly strange doctrine. Does it not

seem to argue a love of loafing rather than a love of life? Far from being an irksome trouble, the search for the right fly should surely be a pastime as interesting as the search for the right word in a difficult sentence; and the delight of finding it is great. Often, in reading books on sport in the South of England, one is almost obliged to wonder whether the right fly is ever found by the authors. One cannot reconcile the thought of their finding it with their habitual indifference to the weight of a basket. It is hardly possible to believe that any man who had even once found trout coming at the flies as they do now and then come, would consider too irksome any trouble taken to bring the great rise about. The great rise is a revelation that once for all puts the mood of prose-poetry in the mind of the ordinary angler into strict subjection to the hope of sport. In relation to the angler's interests, prose-poetry, either as a mood or as a product, is not a thing to be encouraged. It blurs the intellect.

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It pays no respect to the interests of ordinary men. Certain literary anglers may think it incredible that some others unashamedly consider the trout to be more important than the aspect of the meadow-sweet or that of the ambient air; yet that is the case. Indeed, there is many a fellow-creature to whom a stroll by the loveliest riverside is not a pleasure unless he has a rod in hand. We are told that a person of that kind is a poacher by nature and probably in act. Well, I'd rather be a dog and bay the moon than such a Roman as the censor; rather a poacher than a prose-poet; and I will give reasons for rebellion. There is urgent need for plain-speaking on the subject.

Not long ago *The Times* published an article in praise of the Hampshire trout-streams and the method of angling in them. Then the writer of a letter to the Editor made a strange statement. He said that in Hampshire artificially-bred and captive trout were fed on horse-flesh

until they weighed two pounds; that they were turned into streams a few days before the arrival of anglers from London; and that these fish were the game which the Dry-fly Purist, our censor, sometimes caught while admiring the wild flowers and the whispering wind. Could this be true? Was the South of England idyll rotten at the core? Other writers to *The Times* refused to believe the scandal, which was flouted in the journals of sport. Alas, the story, which had horrified anglers all over the land, turned out to be at least partly true. The truth was formally acknowledged. Any one who has watched the artificial rearing of trout will realise what the truth meant. Trout born and grown in a state of nature do not lose their instincts, some of which are self-protective; but trout brought up in captivity become tame and trusting. Throw a handful of things-to-eat into the tank, or into the pond, and they will instantly rush at the tit-bits without the

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slightest fear. They would do so if each of the bits concealed a hook. Now, this acquired rashness continues for a considerable time after the fish have been put into a stream; indeed, there is reason for questioning whether the native instincts are ever recovered. What are we to think of the leisurely gentlemen who, catching fish of that kind, calmly assume and publicly declare that we rustic anglers, mainly in respect that we use more than one fly at a time and do not mind if the lures dip a little below the surface, take trout by unsportsman-like methods?

Do not let us think anything uncharitable. There is no real reason to do so. The error is of the head rather than being of the heart. It is the result of the prose-poetry habit to which many anglers in the South have abandoned themselves. *Æsthetic* emotions are not invariably good. Under their influence the brain may become as balmy as the summer breeze. Certainly it loses touch with

the facts of nature. Save in respect that in the South it is generally recognised as "bad form" to take trout of less than a certain size, all the notions of the Hampshire school, which is very influential among country cousins, are demonstrably absurd. Its limit to the variety of flies has been shown to be unnatural and therefore unscientific. The understanding that its method of angling, with one fly at a time and that fly oiled, is a much finer art than the method generally practised elsewhere is equally frail. The art, says one of its recent exponents, reveringly, "is to be studied almost with prayer and fasting." Is it, now? Why, the trout of any Hampshire stream are at least as easily caught, either with wet fly or with dry, as those of any stream of similar size in any part of the United Kingdom! This will be admitted by any one whose experience enables him to judge. If *The Times* disclosure indicated a general practice, we cannot be astonished.

The other notion on which we have

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touched is that the dry-fly convention, by which angling is regulated in Hampshire, tends towards conservation of the stock. That is the most important of all the notions. If it were true, those interested in trout-streams elsewhere would have something to learn from Hampshire ; but, unfortunately, it seems to be as much a superstition as either of the others. Where else than in Hampshire are tame two-pounders turned into the water to-day to be treacherously slain next week ? Then, why are they turned in ? That can only be because, apart from them, the stock of "sizable" fish would be found unsatisfactory. No other reason is conceivable. Streams that are artificially stocked with large trout, that is to say, have but a spurious prosperity. With rods multiplying and becoming more active from year to year, it is only natural that the Hampshire waters, like others, should gradually lose their large fish ; but, regard being had to the great care taken of the streams in Hampshire, and to the

general assumption that their management is the best in the world, it is astonishing to gather that were they not regularly replenished with heavy trout they would be in as poor a plight as streams elsewhere in England, and all over Scotland, which are under practically no management at all.

This obliges us to perceive that the controversy between the two methods of angling, the Hampshire method and the method which is general elsewhere, has a serious side as well as a silly side. The Hampshire convention, none too attractive either in life or in literature, is confessedly a failure as regards the preservation of the stock. It is questionable whether, with all the advantages touched upon, any mile of the Itchen or of the Test has more trout, or even more large trout, than an equivalent stretch of the Tweed or of the Tay. The less fashionable practice, then, cannot be deemed more injurious than the other.

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The fact is that anglers in all parts of the country have still a great deal to learn. The Scots custom of taking small trout as well as large, a custom which extends far into England, is bad. If small fish continue to be taken in increasing numbers every season, the stocks, even as regards numbers, are bound to decline. The fecundity of trout, great though it is, cannot permanently outstay the inconsiderateness of the anglers on streams that are open to the public. In this respect Scotland is far behind the South of England. Thousands of Scots anglers pursue their sport without the slightest regard to ultimate consequences; but, after all, the South of England does have an ideal. It is certainly anxious that the streams should be worth fishing in for ever. That is easily understood. Men whose habitual haunt is a great city realise the value of trout-streams much more keenly than the country folk to whom these are familiar. It is therefore to the South of England, which really

means London, that we must look for well-informed example.

That is why I have endeavoured to suggest that there is more joy to be found in fly-fishing than the conventions of Hampshire permit. It may seem paradoxical to argue that the race of trout will be preserved and strengthened if the means of catching more of them are adopted; but there is many a truth in the guise of paradox. One, I think, is that in Hampshire and elsewhere there would be more trout, and eventually larger trout, if on all possible occasions every fisherman filled his basket to the lid with trout of "takeable" size. He could not do this without having first acquired a minute acquaintance with the ways of the fish and of the great variety of insects on which they feed. To glean the full delight which a trout-stream is capable of yielding will be well worth the effort through which the knowledge is to be obtained. It will render indolence by the waterside impossible, and apply a

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closure to such sayings as that "It is a profound mistake to suppose that the first object of the angler is to catch fish." The more fish one catches, the more fresh glimpses one gains into the marvellously intricate system of natural laws by which the incidents of the sport are regulated. One finds understanding, that is to say; and it is understanding that is wanted. There is precedent for the belief that opportunities for a sport multiply and become enriched in proportion as the pursuit is freed from prejudicial conventions and conducted with scientific energy. Grouse, for example, are much more abundant now, when many men seek them every August, than they were seventy years ago, when they were sought by only a few; and they are most plentiful on those moors from which the heaviest bags are carried year after year.

It is more than probable that a similar wonder may ere long overtake the trout-streams. A most instructive discovery by Mr. Wilson H. Armistead, an expert

in fishculture and in the management of waters, shows how knowledge is progressing. The trout-fishing in a certain lake, Mr. Armistead tells us, had been steadily falling off from year to year. There was no obvious explanation. The lake was not polluted; it was not overfished by legitimate anglers; poachers did not harry it in any exceptional measure. What was the cause of the decline? Was it that, while plentiful as ever, the fish were gradually ceasing to rise? It would be well, Mr. Armistead thought, to know what stock the water held. To gain this information, he built a trap at the mouth of the stream which feeds the lake. "Every fish leaving the lake to spawn was caught, and the amazing fact revealed that the proportion of males to females was only one in seventeen." This, of course, meant that the stock had been declining, and that it must for a time continue to decline. It is not known that trout are ever polygamous; if any of them are, it is certain that the departures from

the rule are inconsiderable. Thus, Mr. Armistead was justified in inferring from the result of his experiment that out of every seventeen spawn-beds noted by the water-bailiffs soon after the trout had been set free, only one bed was of any value whatever. The other sixteen beds were sterile. The lake was losing stock at the rate of many thousands of trout a-year. There are other waters, rivers as well as lakes, in which the same waste has been mysteriously going on.

Why is it that in many a water the female fish tend to be much more plentiful than the males? There are three known causes of the disproportion. One is that male trout are so much rasher than females that three of every four trout in the fly-fisher's creel are males. Another is that large and well-nourished female trout produce more female than male offspring. The third cause is the destruction of young males by large old ones. Male trout, Mr. Armistead says, "fight so fiercely that any one who has had oppor-

tunity of handling wild spawning fish will frequently find males so badly wounded that they cannot live." Watching a stream carefully, you may see some of this hostility for yourself. It is to be noticed even in spring and summer, when it arises from pure selfishness. Wherever there is a particularly good hover, as just below the place where a ditch runs in, bringing a special supply of food, you shall see a particularly large trout. He is the largest in the neighbourhood. Any male seeking to trespass in the choice corner will be immediately and fiercely attacked; indeed, if the intruder be small enough to be merely impudent, and not a serious rival, he will be seized and chewed. Should the large trout be caught by an angler, his place will soon be taken by the next-largest among those close by, and the state of siege and defence will go on exactly as before. This warfare is greatly aggravated when the time for spawning comes. The female trout seems to be invariably good-tempered,

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accepting the attentions of any male that offers himself; but the males are not indifferent. They have predilections. As far as you can make out, the large ones always desire to mate with the largest of the females; but, unfortunately, the smaller ones have the same ambition. Consequently, a trout-stream in autumn is the theatre of a great many unseemly battles. On almost any shallow you will see a fish furrowing the gravel with its fins. That is the female, making a nest. Very close to her, perhaps alongside, perhaps just behind, is another fish, approximately of the same size, but probably larger. That is a male, intending to be the father of the prospective family. Now and then, from one side or the other, a trout comes over, anxious to supplant him; and either, as is usually the case, the intruder, being comparatively small, is attacked and defeated, or the intruder is heavier and more vigorous, and the mating pair are violently divorced. As a rule, alike in spring and summer and at

the spawning time, it is the old trout that conquers.

That is to the disadvantage of the tribe. The old trout, though good fighters, are not good fathers. Their progeny, besides being female in excessive proportion, tend to be weaklings. Then, the old male trout are cannibals. Their consumption of the young is enormous. It is with good reason believed that an old male trout is as destructive to the young of his own kind as a pike of the same size. Lake trout rise freely to the fly only when they are young or adolescent. There are exceptions, of which Lochleven and Blagdon are examples; but the general rule is as stated. Consider the Highlands, in which there are more lakes than are to be found in all the rest of the Kingdom. On favourable days throughout the season the trout there rise freely to the fly; but the average basket is not better than three to the pound. How is that? It is not to be taken as indicating the average weight of the fish in the water. As you

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perceive when you troll a minnow with success, the lake has trout very much heavier than a third-of-a-pound, and it is reasonable to believe that the larger fish are plentiful. The explanation is simply that when they grow beyond three-quarters-of-a-pound the lake trout as a rule cease to feed on flies habitually. That they feed largely on young fish is a fair deduction from the avidity with which they seize the trolled minnows or small trout.

As regards streams an explanation is readily given. Wherever anglers are at liberty to use worm and minnow as well as fly, the stock of trout is well maintained. Witness the many free waters in Scotland, in which the fish, though declining in size, are not perceptibly diminished in number. On the other hand, wherever all lures save fly are forbidden the stock constantly tends towards decline. Witness the highly-preserved streams in England, in which the trout, while of much better average size, in consequence of a rule that

fish under a certain weight must not be retained, are kept up in numbers only by artificial stocking every year. In streams of the one class the trout past taking fly and becoming cannibal are thinned out by anglers using worm and minnow; in streams of the other class the elderly trout, which only sunken baits would lure successfully, are preserved to become scourges of their species.

Clearly, then, wherever the balance of the sexes is seriously deranged, the old trout should be captured. That is the obvious remedy. At first sight it does seem daring to say that in order that there may be more males we must put an end to the most elderly among the few that are to be found; but that is indeed the case. Destruction of the patriarchs is the condition precedent to a restored state of nature. This has been made clear by the natural history of the problem. It points to an ideal system of management which will, to begin with, offend the understanding of those who are interested in

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“strictly-preserved” streams. “What?” they will exclaim. “Allow worm and minnow? Never!” It cannot be denied that there will be a certain reasonableness in their reluctance. Anglers using worm or minnow would catch not the cannibals only. They would catch young trout also. Still, it is demonstrable that the remedy suggested would do no lasting harm. Whilst it is certain that worm and minnow, deftly plied, would take many a trout that had escaped the fly, the rule as to what is a “sizable” trout would remain in force. All fish under the limit would be returned to the water. Only those above the limit would be kept, and of these not a few would be old trout of no use to the fly-fisher and much worse than of no use to the stock. Trout above two pounds would become fewer; but trout of that weight, and trout between it and the limit, would become so much more plentiful that artificial stocking would be no longer necessary. In other parts of the Kingdom, the problem, as we

have seen, is slightly different. On lakes generally fly-fishing is so attractive that worm and minnow, though not forbidden, are not much in use. They should be more in use. Unless the coarse utility of the net is to be resorted to, it is by means of them alone that the pirates can be kept down. As to the rivers and streams, even those which are open to all-comers will attain their original excellence two or three years after general acceptance of the principle that it is unsportsmanlike and unwise to take a trout which is less than three-quarters-of-a-pound. If all fish under that standard were returned to the water, trout fulfilling the condition of capture, and trout still better, would ere long, in all clean streams, be as abundant as the most exacting angler could wish. Reasons for this statement, and for some of those which have led up to it, will be set forth in our next chapter.

CHAPTER III

MARCH

A Favourite Pool—Trout Not Less Game than Salmon—Dubious Maxims—Trout Scared by Gut and by Landing-net—Flies, Cocked-wing, Flat-wing, and Hackle—Sudden Change of Weather—Principles of Trout-Preservation—Scarcity of Large Fish—How this has come about—The Remedy—English Streams and Scotch Streams—English Anglers and Scots Anglers—The Worm and the Mayfly.

AFTER a day and a night of rain, the river was about four feet higher than usual. That suggests a raging flood; but there was no turbulence. While the tributaries were brawling, the Tay was dignified. Although there had been added to it a flow greater than that of the Thames at ordinary times, a stranger might not have seen that there was a rise. The river, at most places broad even when low, had merely expanded a little in its

ample channel. It was not discoloured. Perhaps it had been slightly muddy, tinged by the first gush from the roads, soon after the beginning of the storm ; but now it was clear, tinted only by the essence of the heather.

A favourite pool looked promising. It always looks so. Whether the water be low or high, the pool is invariably fishable. That is because of the admirable gradient of the gravel bank on which the river rises and falls. When the water is at its lowest the end fly alights upon a depth of about four feet ; when it is high you have a similar depth to cast upon. The river as it rises pushes you back ; but it deepens also. The trout follow the expansion of the water. To-day, it may be, you will raise fish above a place where yesterday you walked dry-shod. They come in to be sheltered from the full force of the stream, or to explore regions from which they are excluded when the water is low.

That is not the way of the salmon. If one be not deceived by noticing where

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these fish rise, they prefer to lie in places where the water is lively, or studded with rocks, and fairly deep.

Still, although apparently lazier, the trout is not less game than the salmon. In proportion to the weights, he seems to be rather gamer. Some say that you should bring a salmon to the gaff in a time measured at the rate of a minute to each pound of his weight. On the test of experience, one feels this to be scant allowance; but it is evidently the accepted rule. Who would undertake to land a two-pound trout in two minutes? On the day mentioned it took ten minutes to capture one which weighed 1 lb. 15½ oz. That, it is true, may be deemed a misleading suggestion. A trout five times the weight would not have taken five times as long to land. The strength of fish does not increase in proportion to weights. A two-pound trout may be as difficult to bring ashore as a five-pounder, and a twelve-pound salmon may fight as well as one much heavier.

Besides, how fiercely a fish fights, or for how long, depends in some measure upon where he is hooked. Hooked in certain parts of the mouth, he has less purchase than he would have if hooked elsewhere. On the very rare occasions when you hook him in both lips, closing them, he may come to the bank as if he were a shot rocket. If by evil hap you have him by the tail or by the dorsal fin, he may keep you going so long that, thinking of other captures possible, you would be rather glad to be quit of him. Truth to tell, maxims about how long you should take to land a fish are not to be accepted literally.

In very clear streams, such as the Tay, you will have but few opportunities to count the time between hooking and landing unless you use gut so thin that any attempt to hasten matters by force will cause a breakage. On very fine gut a pound trout subjected to over-eager coercion is just as likely to be lost as one of any greater weight. In nearly all

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waters trout are at the height of their vigour when they weigh one pound. Some may ask why very fine gut is desirable. Well, it is a fact, readily to be verified, that on many a day a fisherman using fine gut may have brisk sport when an equally skilled hand using gut less fine will have none or hardly any. How are we to account for this? It is more astonishing than it seems at first. The fish, so far as one can make out, are not at all scared by passing leaves, or straws, or twigs, or any other such things borne down by the stream; but they are certainly shy at the sight of thick gut, gut coarse enough to be distinctly visible. Can it be that they know what gut is? The question deserves the attention of such as are of a scientific turn of mind. It is not only the trout's attitude towards gut that occasionally tempts one to believe it possible that the fish has an acquired wariness. Time after time, when he was near the bank, our trout mentioned above bolted at sight of the landing-net. So

did a big grayling, hooked shortly afterwards. These were not by any means the only fish which I have witnessed taking fright and flight amid similar circumstances. All fishermen of any considerable experience will admit that they have seen the same thing often.

Who shall say how it is to be explained? Many trout that are hooked win free, and it has been assumed that they bequeath to their progeny an aversion to gut; but no similar conjecture is plausible in relation to the fear of the landing-net. Only a very few of the trout once in the meshes have escaped to communicate their experience, or to translate it, through their progeny, into racial cunning. Nevertheless, nearly all big trout shy at the net!

Another engaging problem is presented by the trout's bearing towards flies of different types. Consider Canon Greenwell's Glory. That lure, much in use about this time of the season, has two distinct dresses. In one of them the

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wings are so much drooped that they almost lie along the body; in the other the wings are so much cocked-up that the tips of them are slightly in front of the head. To what end was this variety designed? The general understanding seems to be that Greenwell with the upright wings, which came from the Canon's original pattern, is an adaptation to the conditions of dry-fly angling; but that belief, surely, is mistaken. If you cast a cocked-wing Greenwell upstream it will sit very prettily on the water; but you shall not have so many rises at it as will reward you on plying a flat-wing Greenwell similarly. Cast the upright Greenwell across-stream, letting it move round and down; it then acquires an attractiveness with which the flat-wing, similarly used, cannot compete. Very often the trout rise at it in wild eagerness.

The explanation is to be found in the fact that the lure is being held, though not violently, against the current. The cocked wings, which are delicately elastic,

quiver beautifully as the stream ripples against them. Even to the human eye the lure looks like a living thing; it is not astonishing that the trout often find it irresistible. For a similar reason, if you would discover the full utility of "spiders," the little flies which have many legs but no wings, you must ply them in an upstream direction. The hackles are in some cases so soft that they cling to the steel, scarcely adding to its small bulk, when the lures are held against the current; but when you are bringing the lures towards you from an upstream cast the hackles look intensely alive.

Seven fish, smaller, followed the big one into the basket that afternoon. All the trout were caught within two hours. Then a strangely chill wind from the south-west set in, and the rises ceased. The breeze was coming from a stormy cloud portending rain. The sport had been during a lull in the weather. Clearly the storm that had brought the flood was not yet over. It was about to

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resume. There would be no general rising of the trout until, after more rain, the wind should veer to the west-north-west, where it had been during the lull, and, the mercury in the weather-glass, which must be drooping now, should begin to rise again.

One must not be sedulous in fishing for trout in March. The lawful opening of the season is a month earlier than is really desirable. The trout, most notably the large ones, are still capable of much improvement in "condition." They are not yet thoroughly good to eat, and, despite the indulgence of the Law, they should be given a chance to become so. This thought, in a measure apologetic, is particularly applicable in Scotland, where, as has been indicated, trout-preservation is only now becoming a subject of anxious interest. The principles are simpler than they are commonly believed to be. On the Tweed and

elsewhere it is by some persons taken for granted that, after many decades of free fishing, trout are much fewer than they once were. Noticing that large fish in the basket are rarer and rarer, certain students of the subject have inferred that the stocks have been becoming smaller, and have predicted that the species will ere long be extinct. That belief is to a large extent mistaken. Those who entertain it leave out of account the evidence that would meet them if they looked carefully into the streams. Except in places where pollution is serious or pike are plentiful, the rivers hold, if not quite so many trout as they held fifty years ago, as many as there is need for. The real trouble, as was indicated in our last chapter, is that the average size of the fish is less than it used to be. Of this there can be no doubt at all. Three-pounders and four-pounders were once not uncommon in many a water where two-pounders are now so scarce that their

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captures are specially recorded in the public journals.

How is that? How can it be said of any stream that its trout are as plentiful as ever, or at least as plentiful as need be, if it is admitted that the very large fish which were once common have become as noteworthy as golden eagles? Are large trout more easily caught than small ones?

These questions will be put as if they carried their own answers; but the implications are erroneous. Angling is a pursuit in which knowledge comes but slowly and wisdom has lingered for centuries. We sport-loving people of Britain have been fishing for untold generations; yet our natural history of the subject is superficial. We have been assuming that our skill is great in proportion to the weight of the individual fish in our creels. This has occasionally been an assumption not less gratifying than sincere; but it has always been thoroughly unscientific. Large trout in

your basket do bear witness to your skill in "playing" a fish; but they do not necessarily bear witness to any exceptional skill in bringing him to the lure.

At certain times of the season it is the large trout that are most readily hooked.

The times to which I specially allude are spring and the period after the flood which usually comes about the middle of August. These are the times when the trout rise at fly most freely. They rise well in spring because then they have to recuperate after spawning, and they rise well as autumn approaches because then the rapidly-developing roe is making great demands upon their constitutions. Now, how does the angler fare in spring?

Here, to prevent misunderstanding, we must distinguish. While it is true that trout at large rise most freely in spring and as autumn approaches, it is true, also, that all classes of trout in any stream do not invariably rise at the same time. Sometimes it is only the smaller

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fish that rise ; sometimes, indeed, it is only the very small. On other occasions all the trout in the water are eager to feed. These are the occasions to which attention is invited. What happens? Do you catch a great many small fish, and a large one only now and then? You do not. Large ones are the rule; small ones are the exception. When all the fish are disposed to rise, a small trout seizes your fly only when there is no large one near. If a large trout is feeding on flies, small trout close beside him rise only when, as at the instant when he himself is taking an insect, they see a chance to do so without incurring his anger. They know that if they took what he himself wants he would turn and snap at them.

This is not speculative doctrine. Here and there, either when fishing yourself or when watching some one else, you can stand at a place from which all that goes on in a pool is to be seen. If you do, you will find that what has been said

is true. Whenever there is a real rise of trout, the large ones are caught first.

The rule of precedence among trout as regards flies holds good in relation to minnow-fishing also. As we have already noted, trout taken on a minnow are almost invariably above the average of the fish in the water. Some may suggest that it is because only the larger trout take minnows, and in last chapter it was admitted that these trout prefer minnows to flies; but the explanation is incomplete. This is shown by the fact that in a water holding only small fish, trout of a quarter-of-a-pound or even less seize the minnow freely. The full explanation, I think, is to be found when we remember that minnows keep as much out of the trouts' way as they can. You ply your own minnow, not where it would itself be, in some shallow or hiding-place, if it were living and free, but in the open water. Your minnow is an unexpected visitant, welcome to

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trout generally, but a perquisite of the largest among those which see it.

A survey of angling with any other lure, such as worm or the creeper, would lead to the same conclusion; but the cases which have been stated are representative and sufficient.

Each year brings more rods to every river where there is no restriction on the number of anglers; in very many places the trout are to be seen; every angler pays special attention to the large fish; and at certain times the large fish, in relation to tit-bits to rise at or to seize, insist on being served before the small. Is not our statement, then, that at certain times the large trout are the most easily caught, a truism?

To be sure it is; but it is not the less alarming on that account. Being beyond dispute, does it not point to the probability that by and by the trout of many a river will be so small that no one of sportsmanlike instinct will think them worth angling for? It would incline us

to that fear if there were no hope of anglers at large taking a more enlightened interest in the subject; already, indeed, in every region beyond a two-hours journey from London, there are many streams which, although they contain trout in great abundance, are ruined from the sportsman's point of view. Fortunately, however, there is cause for hope. In all parts of the United Kingdom anglers are realising the need for precautions against the possibility that their sport may become a thing of the past.

As was hinted in our last chapter, the chief precaution needed is the establishment of a rule against the retention of trout that are of less than a certain weight. All fish under the standard should be carefully restored to the water. A rule to this effect would have striking results within three years. At the end of that time the average weight of trout in any stream would be much more than it is at present. Many rivers in

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England are under rules of the kind mentioned. The outcome is astonishing. Wherever there is a limit to the angler's privilege of catching and keeping, the trout adapt themselves to it with remarkable uniformity. One June day, on a stretch of the Test where the standard is three-quarters-of-a-pound, an angler had the good fortune to catch fifty trout. Thirty were just over the standard. Each of the other twenty the professional attendant declared to be just under; but the difference between "just over" and "just under" was so slight as to be scarcely perceptible. This incident on the Test, which is not exceptional, seems to show that trout are extraordinarily adaptable to the rational requirements of man. They fulfil his specifications almost to an ounce. They do so from a necessity which on reflection becomes obvious. If on any water all fish under three-quarters-of-a-pound, for example, are allowed to live, the water must at all times have many fish approximately of that weight.

It will be said that what can be done in Hampshire cannot be done elsewhere. The waters of that county are chalk-streams, and therefore, it is generally supposed, are by nature peculiarly well adapted to being haunts of heavy trout. There is little truth, if any, in the belief indicated. Trout in Hampshire and elsewhere in the neighbourhood of London are on the average large simply because those who manage the streams there know, in one respect at least, how sport may be wisely pursued. Trout in other regions are on the average inferior simply because many anglers are inconsiderate. There is no important difference between a stream flowing through chalk soil and a stream flowing through soil of any other kind. Trout do not naturally thrive in the one any better than they thrive naturally in the other. This statement, if examined in the light of an example, will be found true. Compare the Test with the Tay. The Hampshire stream flows through meadow-

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lands, where summer is long and luscious ; the Highland river, for many miles, is bordered on both sides by mountains, on some of which snow lies until June. The Test is gentle, and in many stretches muddy at the bottom ; the Tay is impetuous, and in most places its bed is sand or gravel. No two rivers in the Kingdom present a greater contrast. In the general understanding the Test is an ideal trout-stream while the Tay is an overgrown burn. The Hampshire trout are heavy, game, and of rich quality ; while the Highlanders, it is supposed, are little better than those of a mountain tarn. This is all wrong. The average trout of the Tay is in every respect as good as the average trout of the Test. The Tay, like the Test, is preserved, though not so rigorously. That is the secret of its excellence. Although among the mountains, it is not what is known as a "mountain stream." Its course lies through valleys. Although in the Highlands, that is to say, it is not, except in a volume, noticeably unlike any

ordinary river in a lowland region of the United Kingdom. Any ordinary river would, if it were given fair play, become as good as the Test or the Tay. This is said from more than abstract reasoning. In almost every county there is at least one stream that within the memory of men still living was as good as either of the rivers of which we have been speaking. The institution of a rule determining the weight of "takeable" trout would quickly restore the injured rivers to their natural state. Incredulity as to this will be felt only by those who either have travelled but little throughout the Kingdom or have travelled without being observant. For example, the Eden, in Fife, is so much like the Test that an angler dropped from an aeroplane on one of them, and not being told which, might easily mistake it for the other. The essential similarity is just as striking as the similarity of the general aspects. Though its abundant trout are now not better on the average than five to the

pound, the Eden used to yield baskets as good as those which are common in Hampshire.

These remarks, it will be understood, are impartial. They are intended, not to depreciate the South of England streams, but to make it clear that streams elsewhere are not sufficiently valued. While trout-fishing within easy reach of London costs much, trout-fishing in many other places costs nothing or very little, and therefore has never been esteemed as it should be. Practically every county in the Kingdom will ere long become as attractive as Hampshire if anglers generally maintain their revived interest in the management of streams. It is clear that the first measure of reform must be the imposition of a rule that the taking of immature trout shall be an offence disqualifying the person guilty from exercise of the privilege. Besides being no more than the owners of fisheries are entitled to stipulate, this would be a self-denying ordinance easily borne. It would mean

light baskets this season and the next ; but it would ensure heavy baskets three years hence and every season after. If trout under three-quarters-of-a-pound are saved now, fish of this weight will by that time be as plentiful as fish of three ounces are at present. Does not the prospect warrant the inconsiderable sacrifice ?

The sale of brown trout captured under the privilege should be forbidden. The suggestion is not invalidated by the fact that tenants of grouse-moors sell some of their spoils. The cases are not analogous. The lessee of a grouse-moor is under contract to kill no more when he has bagged birds to a certain number, leaving the stock sufficient ; if the grouse to which he is entitled are more than he himself can use, there is no reason why he should not turn the excess to pecuniary account. A man fishing under privilege is in a different position. It may be that he pays nothing to the owner ; it may be that he pays a small sum, contribution to a fund for the protection of the stream.

In either case, as the owner does not profit in a pecuniary sense from granting the privilege, it is manifest that the beneficiary accepts the boon on the understanding that it is to be used in pleasure only, not for sordid gain. Every large town has a ready market for brown trout; this is known to have greatly encouraged improper methods of fishing on streams open to the public. The traffic must cease if the fisheries are to be redeemed. Obviously it is open to the owner of a stream, whether a private person or the Crown, to say to the public, "Yes, I will allow you to fish, for the pleasure of the pastime; but I will not allow you to fish with intention to make a pecuniary profit." A concession of privilege involving property is not analogous to a concession of political power. It is not accompanied by the implicit sanction of a larger claim.

CHAPTER IV

APRIL.

The March Browns—Time of their Rise—Variants in Imitation—The Large Spring Duns—When Trout are Ravenous—The Twin Trees Pool—Three Good Fish—A Sharp Tussle—Deadlock—Defeat—On a Welsh Stream—Unexpected Good Fortune—Lord Stanley of Alderley—Mr. A. G. Bradley's Query : Divination or Intelligence?—Mr. D. S. Meldrum's Basket—A Lochleven Adept—Char in Perthshire—Trout in Hampshire—A Notorious Angler—Intellectual Development through Sport.

THIS seems to be the month in which the March Browns are most abundant. Day by day they are upon the river in myriads. At the beginning of the month they come out at two o'clock or thereby ; they are a few minutes earlier daily as the spring advances. Observing casually, you might suppose that the large and lazy insects, floating downstream with

hardly even the flutter of a wing, have all come from some place up the water ; but that would be a mistake. March Browns are rising to the surface, simultaneously, at all parts of the stream. On close inspection it is rather an eerie spectacle. Looking at a space of water, you see the surface one moment vacant, and then, in an instant, there are on it three or four March Browns ! Their immobility adds to the wonder of the apparition. If they came up with a splutter or otherwise dashing, you could understand things at a glance ; but you see no evidence of their having come up at all. All you can see is that at this moment there are March Browns where the moment before there was nothing.

They are well liked by the fish. Within ten minutes after they are in full force on the surface, there also, or within a few inches thereof, seem to be all the trout in the river, devouring the clumsy insects. Often one hears of great sport by means of a fly in exact imitation of the March

Brown, male or female; but I myself have never had any particularly good fortune with that lure. For one thing, there is hardly ever time enough to fill a basket with it. Usually, as far as I can make out, the rise is over within an hour, and, it would appear, there is only one rise a-day. Besides, I have never found the trout rising at artificial March Browns so well as they rise at the real ones. Indeed, there is some reason for believing that an artificial fly which in appearance and even in size is slightly different from the model is rather better than an exact effigy. Time and again I have had fair fortune with a fly of wookcock wing and quill or hare's-ear body, while a larger and rougher lure in exact imitation of the March Brown was on the same cast plied with but poor result. This, I think, is not an exceptional experience. If you examine Malloch's Favourite or Hardy's Favourite or any other similar "fancy fly" issued by a noted maker of tackle, you will find that whilst it has a general

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resemblance to the March Brown it is in size and even in other respects a variant. This may perhaps be regarded as considerable evidence in favour of the belief that an exact effigy is not, or at least not always, the most effective lure when the March Brown is on the water.

It may be that the explanation of the puzzling fact under notice is not far to seek. The March Brown hardly ever comes out alone. Its rise is nearly always accompanied by the rise of a large dun, a fly to which Greenwell's Glory, Greenwell without a red or yellow tag, bears a strong resemblance. Between them the two insects, the brown and the dun, cause great excitement among the trout, which become so ravenous as to be almost fearless, and do not go down or dart away when you step within the range of their vision. The fish are in a riot of gluttony. It is at least conceivable that a lure which is smaller than the March Brown, and as it were a compromise between it and the grey dun, may strike

them as being inoffensive and to be given the benefit of any doubt there may be as to its species.

In saying this I do not forget the theory that an artificial fly should as closely as possible resemble an insect which is on the water or due to be there. That I believe to be true ; but it may be admitted that there are at least apparent exceptions to the rule which the theory denotes. Do not the trout, when darkness falls on a summer night, rise well at large lures which are not in all cases like insects on the water ? On such evenings the fish are excited and made rash by greed, and certainly seem to be not quite so critical about lures as they are at ordinary times.

At any rate, unless the water is too high or too low, the Tay pool near The Twin Trees on the Kenmore Road may be visited with hope on almost any April day. The stipulated condition is important. Some pools, such as that which was described at the beginning of last

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chapter, adjust themselves to any flow ; but the Twin Trees Pool is not one of them. It is in ply only when there are two or three inches of water running in the channel through the island of gravel which bounds it on the north. Then it is exactly right : heaving and wavy from the violence of the rapids just above, yet of such gentle current that you can manage the flies pleasantly while casting upstream. Any time in April when the water is at this height and the March Browns or the large duns or both are out, you shall see rises. The pool is short, not much more than twenty yards, and there are never many rises, usually not more than three or four ; but the trout are large, and sometimes, if you go about the matter in tactful detail, you can have them all. The procedure, of course, is to begin with the one nearest you, at the end of the pool, preventing him, when hooked, from running upstream, to scare the others ; to take the next-nearest in the same way ; and so on, until the one that has

been hovering in front of the hawthorn at the head of the pool is safely in the creel. On a fine bland noontide last spring the trout weighed, respectively, 1 lb., $1\frac{3}{4}$ lb., and $2\frac{1}{4}$ lb. Each of them had been gobbling the March Browns and the duns at the rate of a dozen or so a minute, and each had taken the Woodcock at or about the first time of asking.

What, however, was that fish which had been rising, less regularly, beyond the middle of the stream? There the water was just a little more rapid than trout approve so early in the season; all the other fish had been hovering, within five feet of the bank, in what might be called a bay. The best mode of answering the question was, if it were possible, to raise him.

Raised he was, and that at the first cast; and his species was instantly evident. There was no pulling this fish downstream. He went up, a good many yards past the hawthorn, fortunately well out on the other side, so that the line was not en-

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tangled in the overhanging branches ; and when he came down he moved slowly, tail-first, the while one's rod-arm was in a throbbing agitation just like that which you sometimes suffer when holding the receiver of a telephone. By and by he was within four yards of me ; but he did not tarry. Off he dashed across the water. Would he turn down now, and persevere in that direction ? If so, I should have to hold tight and be bidden farewell through a breakage. There is an overhanging tree at the end of the pool, as well as one at the top. Therefore I could not on the land follow the fish ; and, there being a very deep hole on the other side of the obstruction, I had better not follow him by water. Luckily, he did not go down. He did not even go up. He came towards me. Here too, however, danger lurked. What if he should seek shelter under the tangle of thin branches on the tree-stump in the water at my feet ? That seemed to be precisely what he meant to do ! As he neared the

stump, which was not upright, but leaning over, forming a small cavern, I gradually let the rod droop until the point nearly touched the water and between the top ring and the cast there was not more than a foot of line. It was a trying situation. I was pushing the rod out as far as I could stretch, and the fish was pulling the bent top-piece in. If only "Miss Winsome" had been with me as usual, this strained relation would have been averted. She would have driven the fish from the stump by smiting the water with the landing-net. It is not always prudent to go fishing on the Tay alone. While I was engaged in these reflections, the unexpected happened. If the fish had come in a few inches farther the gut would have been caught among the twigs; but, to my astonishment, he turned and charged to the other side again. My relief was fleeting. The flush of warmth which had suffused my trembling legs gave way to a cold sweat. He was coming straight back, and that

with less deliberation and greater speed ! This time he did not shirk the cavern. He ran right in, and settled down. There had been no stopping him. I had, as before, applied the closure when the cast-loop was a foot from the top ring ; but that had been of no avail. He had merely pulled the rod into a sharper curve.

This was a painful deadlock. There was no possibility of hoping that the fish would be in a hurry to come out. I was under arrest, and should have to remain so until help arrived. Home was less than a mile away. It was just possible that if I were late for luncheon "Miss Winsome" might divine that something of the kind had happened, and would come. Rarely had I needed her more. Should I lay down the rod, drop from the high bank, and drive the fish out with the landing-net ? If I did, he might have the rod away with him before I could scramble up again. On the other hand, how long was I to stand in this humiliating pose ? Hark ! A footfall on the high road, just behind !



W. L. Wood, junior.

1. JUST BELOW THE TWIN TREES POOL (*page 76*).
2. DOWN A BIT ; A SALMON ON.

It was that of a tall young man in a frock-coat. "Hullo!" I shouted, invitingly. The stranger stopped and gazed, but did not approach. "Just a minute!" I said, appealingly; and through the copse he came, with hesitating steps, keeping his eyes on me suspiciously. When he was close by and at a standstill, he looked at me in grave and doubtful inquiry.

I handed to him my cigarette case, and, when he had struck a match, said slowly, as if in no excitement at all, "Will you oblige me by stepping upon that stump, and poking the shaft of this landing-net down by the upper side?"

It was in order not to put him in a fluster, and to prevent him from bungling, that I stated only the bare requirements of the case. If I myself were asked by any one to stir up a lurking fish, I should be considerably put about.

The stranger complied with greater readiness than I had expected, and his help was effective. The moment the shaft was down the fish was out. Alack,

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the pull of the line was not direct ! The gut was over a twig. It was speedily sawn in twain.

“ Ah ! thank you,” I said to the pallid youth : “ that’s all right.”

It seemed unnecessary to tell him that a salmon had come and gone. Indeed, telling him might have confirmed his impression that he was in odd company. Instead, I drew his attention to the trout in my basket, lying on the bank. The sight of them neither wrought any change upon his countenance nor induced him to speak. Having looked at the trout for a moment and then at myself for several moments, he went off through the wood, slowly for a few yards, and then with long and rapid strides. Obviously his belief was that he had chanced upon a person who was “ not all there.”

At least once before I had been under the same suspicion ; but then I had been cleared. That was in Wales.

"There are big trout there," said Lord Stanley, brother and predecessor of the present Baron of Alderley.

We had come, one fine morning, to the overflow of the lake lying between his estate and that of Lord Anglesey. In fact, this was the beginning of the stream on which we were to have a day's fishing. The water fell into a large pool, upon which we were looking from the bridge that carries the road to a handsome homestead less than a hundred yards off.

"You fish there for a while," he went on; "I will begin just below the bridge."

Of course I set about doing as I was bid; but I had not much expectance. To tell the truth, I had none at all. I took it that my delightful friend, who liked a joke, was playing some little trick. The pool certainly looked very fine. There was in it plenty of deep, dark, wavy water. Still, it was not a pool such as could be expected to have big trout. The fall from the lake was so great that no fish, if you except the

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very young eel, which can climb over practically anything, could go through it; and never in the course of many wanderings had I found other than small trout in a pool out of which there was no free course up the water. In mountain streams there are frequent pools of that kind, and experience had seemed to teach that they were not worth dallying over. It was not in the confined pools, howsoever good to look at, but in the open spaces, that the best trout were to be found. I dared say to myself that when I overtook him my jovial host would have a few fine fish in the creel and I myself should have none.

“But what was that?” I had suddenly to ask.

I had been casting from the bridge, lazily, carelessly, expecting nothing; but surely that was a rise in the middle of the heaving waves? It had been at one of my flies, too; and it could be no troutlet that left such a mark in such turbulent water.

Ah, there he was again, and this time the line was taut !

It was not a small fish I had on. Being high above the pool, on which sunshine was shimmering, I had seen him as he rose from the depth. He was larger than the best of the trout any of us had taken from the Alderley lakelets, stocked from Lochleven.

How was I to get him out ?

The sides of the pool, like what may be called the apron, were high and precipitous ; and I could not drop from the bridge, which was at least twenty feet above the water. What had Lord Stanley told me to do in the event of my having a fish on ? For the life of me, I could not remember. It had been an explicit injunction ; but, as I had taken it to be part of a practical joke, it had fallen on inattentive ears.

My host himself could not be far off ; but, what with the noise from the water-fall and that of the wind in the trees, he would not hear my cry for help.

A stableman was crossing the yard of the homestead. I shouted. He stopped, and looked. I shouted again; but he did not come. He disappeared; then was immediately, with another stableman, back to where he had stood. I waved a beseeching arm, and beckoned by a backward movement of the head. At length the two rustics began to approach. They were eminently cautious, and took their own time in coming. They kept at a discreet distance when they reached the bridge, and when I had spoken they were mute. By a motion of the free hand I directed their gaze to the tense rod, and to the trout, which was hop-skip-and-jumping among the surge at the foot of the cascade; but the sporting aspect of affairs seemed not to interest them. Having looked at the fish for a few seconds, they turned their eyes again upon myself, and grinned.

“Could you find Lord Stanley?” I asked, making a gesture to indicate where he should be looked for.

This, happily, was understood. The stablemen turned, went to the other side of the road, and looked over the parapet; then one of them sauntered off; and very soon Lord Stanley, his quizzical countenance in a state of interrogation, came to a halt beside me.

What should I say? To own that I had forgotten what I was to do if I hooked a fish would not be the right way out. It would be tactless, unkind, a confession putting him to disappointment and me to shame. I hastily wondered, Could I lay the fault on the stablemen without doing them any harm? Thinking I might venture on this tack, I said, wearily, that these yokels—dem 'em—didn't understand the English of the King—God bless him!

This speech, which in a vague way I felt to be not at random, but somehow inspired, was exactly what the circumstances demanded. Instantly it brought a look of understanding to the countenance of Lord Stanley, who, turning upon

the stablemen, spoke, in a tongue which I took to be Welsh, a few wrathful words that sent them scampering to their quarters. When they emerged thence, which was with no delay, I recollected my instructions. The stablemen were running towards us with a ladder. If I hooked a trout I was to shout for a ladder!

Soon it was placed in the pool and against the parapet. Down went Lord Stanley; and as he came up again, cautiously flourishing the landing-net in triumph, his singularly pleasant face was more even than usually lit up with boyish glee.

A strain of the slightly-unusual which runs through this chapter recalls attention to a problem propounded, in a letter, by Mr. A. G. Bradley. "Why do certain men always kill more trout in a lake, in ordinary drift-fishing, where no local knowledge or dodges of any kind come

in, than other men who are good fishermen with an equal length of experience?" There cannot be any doubt as to the assertion in this query. Every angler will know at least one other whose habitual success is not easily accounted for. My correspondent, who was a friend of Mr. W. C. Stewart in the later days of that famous fisher, knows four of the mysteriously successful men. I myself know some. Of these the most striking example is Mr. David Storrar Meldrum, right-hand man to the Editor of *Blackwood*. One April morning he took me to Carriston, a small loch not far from Kingskettle, in Fife; and when we came off the water, at nightfall, his basket was as heavy as my own. That statement is not so conceited as it looks. I myself had been fishing diligently for years; but Mr. Meldrum had hardly ever cast a fly before. He was thoroughly successful on what was practically his first day. The flies he used, it is true, were those I chose for him, duplicates

of those I chose for myself; but that is a small consideration. Mr. Bradley declares, in regard to his four mysterious adepts, that "the secret is not in any of their cases revealed by the flies. One of them, who has represented England in Lochleven competitions, told me that he thought he had some exceptional faculty or instinct for divining the touch of a fish under water."

That is an interesting suggestion. Certainly there are wonders to be witnessed in the sport. A few are brought to mind by what my correspondent says. The first is connected with char, which, like trout, are of the salmonkind; and it is a case in point. There was a series of seven or eight very sultry evenings on a Perthshire loch. At the beginning of this period the trout were not rising well, and by the end of it they were not rising at all; but, for the first time in the season, the char began to rise on the earliest of the sultry evenings, and on the last of them an angler in

whose company I was afloat caught nearly a score. I witnessed, from strike to landing-net, the capture of each char ; but I did not see a single rise. Even when a fish took a fly immediately after it fell upon the gently-rippling water, there was never a visible break on the surface. "Do you see the rises?" I asked ; and he answered that he did not. How, then, did he know when to strike ? He could not tell exactly. He thought it might be by noticing an almost imperceptible arrest in the movement of his line, a movement caused by little more than the weight of the line itself.

I witnessed a similar marvel on the pretty stream which flows past Haslemere and Liphook. Day after day one of a small party who were being entertained by Mr. T. J. Barratt, that princely host, had been catching more trout than anybody else, and I went to look on at his doings in the evening. "Ah, here's a good fish !" he exclaimed, striking ; and, sure enough, his rod was bent and active.

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I remarked that I had not seen the rise. "O, that's nothing!" he answered, laughing. "When we land this one I'll catch five more without your seeing a rise." He was as good as his word. He did catch five more, and every time he struck he was, so far as could be seen, striking at nothing at all! As we were packing up the rods he explained that he struck whenever he noticed a stoppage of the line.

From these two cases it would appear that exceptionally gifted fishermen owe their success not to divination but to rare acuteness of the eyesight. As it would be tiresome to have in angling any element of uncanniness, this is pleasant knowledge. It may serve to solve Mr. Bradley's perplexity in its specialised formulation. "I can, of course," he writes, "understand there being grades among wet-fly fishermen who know more or less how to fish. That is simple. But I cannot understand one man standing out. There is a man called E—, a

resident in London, but a native of the South Wales border—of the Monnow, Arrow, Honddu, and that group of streams—of the upstream and under-tree class of fishing. The country is full of born fishermen; but this man never fails to make the biggest baskets. He isn't a poacher, but a gentleman and a sportsman. He is such a terror that some owners won't give him leave. His acquaintances cannot account for it. He is most notorious, and far outnumbers every one."

I know a good many persons like this raider of Wales. Their deftness can be explained, I think, without recourse to the theory that their greenhearts or built-canes are a newly discovered kind of divining-rods. It seems to be attributable to the faculty of observation, and to that alone. Habitual frequenters of a water are often astonished by the success of some angler fishing there for the first time. He always pauses at the best places; he seems always to have a trout

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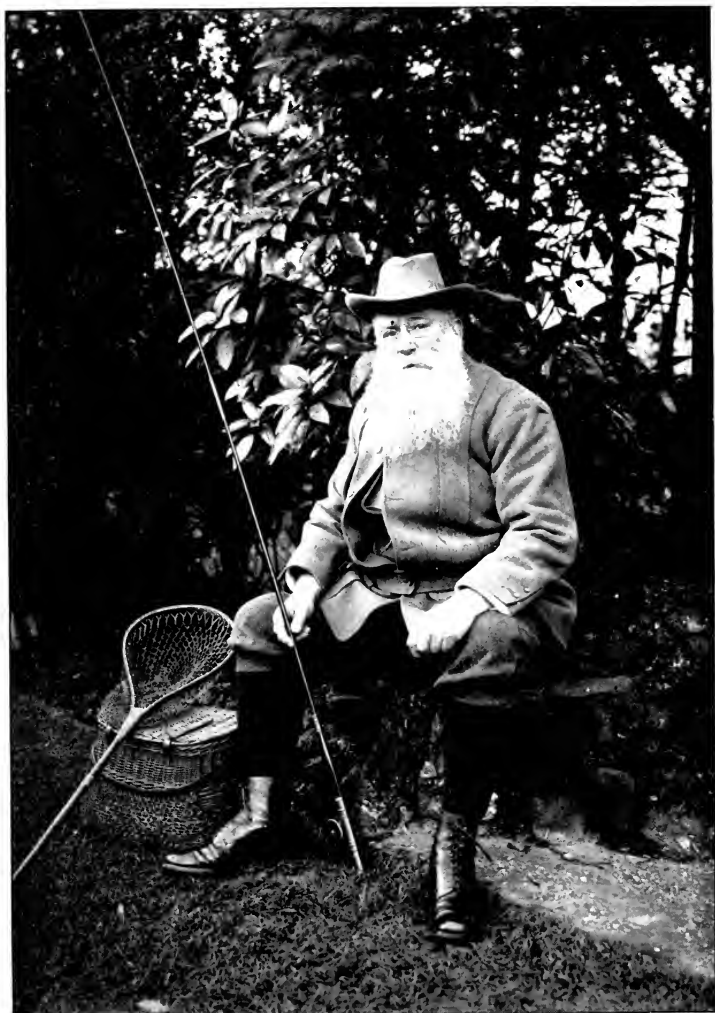
on or just landed. Surely, the beholder may feel, it is instinct that guides him? How otherwise could he unerringly cast his flies just where fish are lying? How have so many rises? How miss so infrequently? A generalised answer seems possible. We have seen that aptness in striking a fish under the surface springs not from instinct or divination but from acuteness of sight; perhaps a delicate sense of touch assists the eye. All other phenomena in the practice of the fisherman who astonishes by success are equally aspects of skill derived from intelligence and experience. If it be not very large, a trout-stream visited for the first time is as an open book to the well-trained angler. The fish of very large rivers have peculiarities of habit, here shunning what seem good places, and there crowding into places apparently unattractive; but those of what may be called ordinary streams are uniform in their ways. That is how a good man, though quite new to a

water, knows at a glance where to cast. Trout will be hovering in such places in this stream as they frequent in any stream well known to him. Similarly, the fly of the season, which is sometimes the fly of an hour, is that which trout prefer. Habitual anglers anywhere are usually too indolent to trouble about discovering it; Mr. E——, I suspect, always has it on. The rest of successful craft consists in allowing the lure to move in or on the water just as an insect would, in the quick sight which the Lochleven champion mistook for divination, and in that self-command which enables you to strike delicately whenever a trout touches.

Even so, the problem is not yet completely solved. Mr. Bradley may say, "Think of twenty anglers, of similar age and of equal experience; and you will find that two or three are very much better than the others." Well, what of that? It only shows that men are not equal in talents or in achievements. Some

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are exceptionally gifted in the faculty of observation and in the power of reasoning from things observed ; and naturally these excel. As for my own instance, that of the friend who had nearly a creelful of trout on his first attempt : that is a harder nut to crack ; but it is crackable. A few years ago, writing in *The Academy*, then under the control of Mr. C. Lewis Hind, who liked his contributors to be original, I set forth the proposition that any one who was adept in angling was necessarily of high capacity in purely intellectual arts. This teaching did not at the time call forth much public comment. Perhaps that was because it was not presented with sufficiently elaborate reasoning. The fact is, the proposition, instead of having been thought out, was merely the expression of an intuitive surmise. Now, to my astonishment and delight, it turns out to have been profoundly true. Writing to *The Times* in support of Mrs. Humphry Ward's plea that London should provide public playing-grounds



MR. T. J. BARRATT (*page 91*).



for children, the most authoritative men of science have conclusively shown that the peculiar training which comes through sports or games is helpful in the proper development of intellectual capacity. That men intellectually eminent must soon acquire exceptional efficiency in any skilled craft they take to, especially if it be angling, the subtlest of all sports, is not a strained corollary. It is an inference from the ascertained nature of things. If Mr. Bradley will pass all his angling friends and acquaintances under review, he will come upon an illuminating fact. He will find that among the mysteriously successful ones, although a few may be vagabonds, there is not a single person who lacks intellectual superiority to ordinary men. One of my own mysteriously successful angling friends, the deftest of them all, is not grammatical, and cannot even spell with correctness; but an amazing skill, similar to that with which he casts his flies or guides his sunken lures, runs through all his more serious activities, which are

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invariably prosperous. Had his academic education been such as his capacities invited, he would, I really believe, have risen to some high post in the service of our country and the Crown.

CHAPTER V

MAY

The Temperate Month—Real Beginning of the Trout Season—On Loch Derculich—Mr. W. L. Wood—The Junglecock - and - Black—James Stewart—Large Flies Mysteriously Successful—Precedents from Bygone Times—Testimony of Ancient Tackle-Books—On Loch-na-Craig—Lochleven Trout in the Highlands—The Moness Burn—The Provost off-Duty—What Might be Made of Burns—The Evening Rise.

MAY, as a whole, is the briskest month of the trout season. The fish, it is true, are not in the best condition until about the middle of June, by which time, in many parts of the country, they have had a fortnight's feasting on Mayflies ; but in May they rise freely, and are sufficiently well nourished to be worthy alike of the sportsman's zeal and of the cook's respect. Before then they take flies, real

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or artificial, eagerly ; but such of them as are old enough to have spawned are still frail, some of the large ones so pitifully that it is a shame to catch them. After the Mayfly period, which is not exactly at the same time on all streams, there is a lull that lasts until the weather breaks in August. The trout seem to be sated with insect food ; at any rate, they are much more unwilling, during daylight, to rise at any flies which the angler offers. Also, in June and July they sometimes fall off in condition. After that, especially if rain be frequent, there is a distinct improvement for three or four weeks ; in many cases a September trout is actually better than a July one.

Though at present we feel that no sunshine could be so warm as to be unwelcome, June, or July, or August, when upon us, is apt to have a temperature in which to wield a trout-rod is to toil ; but May, as a rule, has weather which is exactly suited to the gentle exercise. Besides, the temperate month brings out

upon the waters such a large variety of insects that the angler has scope for an agreeable exercise of craft. May, in short, is the real beginning of the season.

There is an especial interest in being on any water for the first time. In what respects will the fish turn out to be different from those of other places? As usual on such an occasion, that was the subject which concerned us when one morning, at the hospitable bidding of Mr. Stewart-Robertson of Edradynate, we set out upon Loch Derculich. My companion Mr. W. L. Wood, who had fished there nearly twenty years ago, had been declaring, on the way uphill, that very large flies, flies at least twice the size of those which are standard on Lochleven, would be needed. This had puzzled me. Was it to be supposed that the insects of one water differed in size from insects of the same species on another water? Mr. Wood, though a connexion of Professor

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Wilson, "Christopher North," was not prepared to enter upon discussion of a problem so profound. The only opinion to which he would commit himself was that the flies to be successfully used on Derculich must be large, and that the trout liked them to be black in the body.

Well, he was right. The first rise was at his cast, and when the trout, fully 1 lb., was in the landing-net, it was seen to have taken a large Junglecock-and-Black. The next rise also was to my friend, and again it was the Junglecock that scored. The third rise and the fourth, one to him and the other to myself, were simultaneous. Mr. Wood's fish was on a large Teal-and-Black; mine, considerably smaller, was on a Saltoun, which is a dun with a black body ribbed in silver.

Lest these hasty statistics should make it appear that sport was brisk, let me mention that it was rather slow. Not a single rise had either of us had while James Stewart, faithful guide on many such a day, was rowing us from the boat-

house to the west end of the water, where we were to begin the first drift; and James had looked upon that fact with misgiving. It had made him, and us, scan the sky, there to behold, in the aspect of the clouds, signs of "thunder in the air." As a matter of fact, we had been drifting about quarter-of-an-hour before the first rise came, at least as long between that and the second, and at least as long between the second and the other two. You may say that a trout to each quarter-of-an-hour is as much as any reasonable man can expect; and I agree. By six o'clock, however, when reluctantly we left, we had caught only sixteen fish. That was at the rate of one trout to each rod every hour, and, as I myself had caught only seven, the sport, from my own point of view, was still more modest. It was nothing like so good as that of which the loch was known to be capable. A few days before, two lads, guests of the neighbouring laird, had come down the hill with a basket of thirty-three fish and

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a report that the trout had been rising with astonishing freedom. No : there cannot be any denying that we should have had similar fortune if the weather had been favourable. Trout never do rise well in time of sultriness. That is one of the few dogmas which no angler will dispute.

The remarkable thing was the triumph of my friend's prediction about the flies. His set not only lured more trout than came to my own, which were of standard sizes, but also they lured larger trout. His fish ranged from $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb. to $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. ; mine from $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. to $\frac{1}{3}$ lb. This brought to mind a saying of Gould, gamekeeper at Balbirnie, who used to come to see to one's comfort on Clatto Water, in Fife : " If ye want big troot, ye maun use big flees." I laughed at this at the time, though never in the presence of Gould, who was a famous character, commanding everybody's respect ; but I am not laughing now. As a general rule the trout flies which succeed best are in all respects,

especially in size, approximately exact imitations of insects on the water at the time of fishing ; but it begins to be manifest that there are exceptions to the rule. My companion at Derculich mentioned that long ago, when frequently he fished on Loch Rannoch with Sir Robert Menzies, who was so keen a sportsman that he dwelt in a hut by the loch for a week at a time, living mainly on trout the while, the flies in vogue there were as large as seatrout flies. We have seen what lures the Derculich trout prefer. Then, we all know, if not by experience, either from hearsay or from accounts in the journals of sport, that the great trout of Blagdon Lake, among which five-pounders are frequent, take flies that are practically salmon flies. What is the meaning of these facts ?

I thought I had hit on the explanation when reading a certain article in *The Field*. There I learned that trout which since the war were put into South-African streams are beginning to give

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sport; that the flies they take are very large; and that their proneness towards such lures is attributable to their taste having been vitiated by the rich and rather gross artificial feeding of their youth and adolescence. A very brief reflection sufficed to show that these tidings cast no light upon the problem. It is easy to believe that trout brought up on horse-flesh or liver may come to have a perverted appetite and false instincts, and it is known that in some cases fish reared in hatcheries are a good long time in stream or lake before they revert to the ways of wild trout; but what has that to do with a matter such as Loch Derculich? Derculich has no sophistication about it. Lying in mountainous land far up towards Faragon, it is at least a thousand feet above the sea. No man has ever, so far as is known, put into it an alien trout. Only a few men, indeed, have ever seen the beautiful and splendid water, which is far away from any public path. In short, Derculich, like Rannoch,

is a trout water in an untarnished state of nature.

By the time we reached the valley neither Mr. Wood nor James was able to offer any explanation of the trouts' insistence upon large flies. I was equally at a loss. However, a surmise comes. Either Loch Derculich has insects larger than those of the same species which are common elsewhere, or there is an especial reason why the trout in it take lures so large that they would be ignored by trout in other waters. Which theory are we to adopt?

The first is a shot in the dark, and I think it misses. We saw a few insects on Loch Derculich, and they were certainly not larger than those of the same kinds which are to be seen on more familiar waters. James remarked that moths come out of the heather on the margins of Highland lochs, and that the moths are as large as my friend's flies. That is true; but it does not settle the question. The moths do not come out until the

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dusk is deep. Trout anywhere rise at them, or at imitations of them, then ; but trout in any familiar water do not rise at artificial moths in daytime. You might as well fish with a Mayfly in August as with a moth when the sun is up.

The other theory also is a shot in the dark ; but I am not so sure that it is a miss. Simply it is that the Loch Derculich trout are so peculiarly in a state of nature that they are exceptionally lacking in discrimination. They are not, as those of Lochleven and many other waters are, sought by anglers every day of the season. They do not, I understand, see artificial flies on more than six or eight days of the year. It is therefore conceivable that, if the flies are not wrong in shape or in colour, an erroneous largeness, instead of repelling, may be attractive. Bearing in mind that the fish in much-thrashed waters nearly always ignore lures of more than natural size, one perceives this theory to imply that trout are capable of being "educated," and

that is an assumption which in another book has been seriously called in question; but, after all, there may be something to be said for it. It fits into the facts of the entertaining case. Also, it bridges the years between this time and the days of our grandfathers. In many a Highland mansion or farmhouse there is still to be seen an ancient tackle-book, and the flies in the parchment pockets or stuck into the flannel leaves are invariably at least twice as large as any with which we should think of fishing on much-whipped waters now. Is there not a clear inference? These rude flies certainly did take trout, and many of them. Happily, indeed, sometimes there is still their old owner to tell you so. It may be that large lures are successful on Loch Derculich merely because that water and its trout are to-day in a state of nature similar to that of all Highland lochs and their trout sixty or seventy years ago.

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Not far from Loch Derculich is Loch-na-Craig, three miles from Aberfeldy on the road to Crieff. It is bounded by a long and lofty crag on the west and by the highway on the east. It is 1100 feet above the level of the sea. Casually passing by, you would not think it a water from which any considerable basket of trout could be taken. "There must have been trout there long ago," you would feel; "but many people are on the road every day, and wayfaring anglers will have left only a few fish, if any." It must be in consequence of some such process of reasoning that Loch-na-Craig is unknown to anglers generally. The water deserves to be rescued from the obscurity in which its topographical prominence has placed it. Loch-na-Craig is in some respects the most interesting water I have cast flies on since first I became acquainted with the two ponds into which the Wey gathers itself at Haslemere. What wonderful ponds these are! At the side of a much-frequented

road and not guarded by any gamekeeper, they could not be suspected of containing anything better than an eel; yet one afternoon Mr. T. J. Barratt and I took from them 25 lb. of handsome trout. It would seem that waters which are most in the public view are the least severely poached. Hardly any one deems them worth trying.

On Loch-na-Craig the other morning the most enthusiastic angler could easily have been excused if he had wished to be under shelter again as soon as possible. More inauspicious weather could not have been imagined. The wide valley on the south was filled with mist, surging athwart a dense cloud which was steadily blackening; out of the darkness came a cold wind in gusts; and the stinging sleet was heavy. Nevertheless, James Stewart, managing the boat, was not in despair. He explained that the wind was from the very quarter which brought good luck to Loch-na-Craig. A breeze from any westerly direction never did at all; instead of

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striking the water fairly, it swirled round the corners of the crag, and threw the ripples into a jumble. Yes : the sky was rather dull ; but what of that ? Clouds were very favourable on Loch-na-Craig.

It turned out that there was more than the spirit of Mark Tapley in James's counsels. The basket held two trout, each of them about 1 lb., before we had been quarter of an hour afloat. That seemed to foretell a creditable creel at the close !

Alas, the wind suddenly fell when the fly was being disengaged from the second fish. The sleet and the cold continued ; but the atmosphere was still. It was not so for long. Soon wind came with a roar round the northern end of the crag, and the loch was seething white. I dare say that if we could have heard anything but the squall we should have heard thunder also. Now, a thunderstorm does not invariably put the trout down ; on the contrary, it frequently brings them up. They lie low when thunder is approach-



1. LOCH DERCLICH FROM THE SOUTH-EAST.
2. A GOOD DRIFT ON THE SOUTH SHORE.

W. L. Wood, junior.

(page 102).

ing, and bestir themselves soon after it has begun. Nearly always, however, they are in no mood to give sport when the wind is shifty. Thus I felt sure that our brace was all we should see that day. James himself, I gathered from his silence, was of similar mind; but James is too experienced a hand, and too keen, to think of scuttling from weather of any kind while still the day is young. Soon, therefore, we had begun a drift on the wild surge from the head of the little loch. Another trout was on before we were well under weigh!

Shortly after noon the sky was blown comparatively clear of clouds. Some of the higher hills were capped with snow. "I don't like that Lochaber wind," said James, with a cheerful intonation, which meant, "though, of course, the rise may go on in spite of it." The phrase was picturesque. It was singularly sagacious also. Next morning's journals brought news that the snowstorm had been particularly heavy in Lochaber. Who

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can deny that even three trout were more than could be expected in such weather at the high noon of spring? Still, the basket held six more than that by five o'clock, when it was time to go.

Then there was further cause for astonishment. James had mentioned, in the morning, that most of the trout in Loch-na-Craig were Lochlevens. Why had we been so unlucky as to catch no Lochleven trout? I had scrutinised each of our nine fish as it was being played into the landing-net, and never a Lochleven had I seen. That had been the only real disappointment. Our fish, while we were afloat, had been in a pail. On landing, James turned them out on the heather, and, behold! most of them were Lochlevens. There was no mistaking the shape or the sheen. The brown tint derived from the essence of peat in the Highland water had vanished on exposure to the air.

On our way down the hill, James Stewart admitted that a basket of nine

good trout was not exactly what you could call bad for such a day ; but he said this grudgingly. Obviously he thought that we should have done better notwithstanding the snow and the Lochaber wind. The loch, he mentioned, was not often fished ; but when it was he was there as a rule, and 17 lb., or even more, was a usual result. The water is one of the many lochs on the domain of Lord Breadalbane. Periodically he stocks it with Lochlevens. A few years ago rainbow trout were put in ; but none of these is ever caught. It is thought, James said, that they have all gone down the stream which runs from the loch into the Braan. That is probably the explanation. The latest conjecture about the rainbows is that they are young Steelhead salmon, which are native to certain waters in America. If that be so, we can understand why they seek the sea, though not why in this country they never reappear in the fresh water. Many practical students of fishculture consider

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it fortunate, on the whole, that rainbows do not willingly make homes in this country. They are beautiful fish, and very game ; but, it is said, they cease to rise at fly when they have attained a weight of about 2 lb., and it is beginning to be feared that our native trout suffer from them severely.

Over the heather-clad uplands at the back of the crag which has been mentioned flows the Moness, towards which, when May comes round, our neighbour the Provost turns an eager fancy. At half-past five one bright morn, looking out of the window of my room, I saw him, in his garden, staring fixedly at our roof. I dressed, went out, and asked whether anything was wrong. O, no. He had only been watching for the appearance of smoke from our chimneys ; which would let him see that the household was astir. There had been heavy rain in the night, and the burn would

be in flood; and should we not be going up the hill? Now, though his town could go comfortably into half of St. James's Park, the Provost is in his own sphere no less a personage than the Lord Mayor of London is in the city or in Paris. His invitations are little other than commands. Thus, by nine o'clock we were high among the hills. Having intended to seek a few trout in the Tay, I had set out on the climb with reluctance; but, now that I was on the bank of the tributary, the prospect was not unpleasing. It was good from the height to see, in a wide expanse, still greater heights, with drifts of snow lying dead-white in the sunshine; the south-west wind was bright and light; and the stream, singing through the heather, had a tawny and attractive fulness.

Despite his seventy-five years, the Provost is an agile sportsman. His municipal duties allow him to have no more than a few days' fishing in a season, and therefore he makes good use of his

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time by the waterside. He is never for a moment at rest. Before my own rod was in ply His Honour, by that time fifty yards away, had about half-a-dozen fish in his creel. I had seen them tossed out of the water. You do not need to use much ceremony with the hill trout. You may offer them flies if you like, and in that case, when you hook a fish, you had as well be wary, fly tackle being delicate gear; but anglers to the mountain born, though highly polite to strangers, have an ill-concealed contempt for daintiness such as that. The Provost merely dropped his line into every likely place, and out a fish came flashing! Two seconds or so after a trout caught sight of the worm that trout was transferred to the heather. When angling in the valleys one puts on a fresh worm, if that bait is used at all, for each trout, it being on the plains a traditional and well-founded belief that even a slightly lacerated worm will scare instead of attracting; but in the hill stream the

same worm serves for fish after fish, and is good when only a mangled fragment remains. It was astonishing, also, to find that smallness of hook, deemed necessary on waters below, was wasted consideration on the mountain. Noticing that the Provost's hook was large enough to be the basis of a seatrout fly, and thinking that he might have none smaller, I had offered him, when he was about to go off, a few Stewart tackles, and these, with Highland courtesy, he had accepted; but when we met for luncheon I noticed that it was a large single hook he had been using, and his basket held six dozen trout! It could not have been from unwillingness to lose time in changing that the Provost had left the Stewart tackles unused. Soon after beginning, he mentioned, he had been broken by an unexpectedly heavy fish, a half-pounder. As he had put on another of his large hooks, it was clear that he held them to be better adapted to the ways of the upland trout. How the fish contrive to seize them I cannot

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say. Some of the trout were of the five-to-a-pound class ; but the average weight was slightly under three ounces, and in relation to the little fish my venerable friend's gear seemed grotesquely out of proportion.

Is it wrong to take such fish ? If you are used to more considerable trout you may be disposed towards a vicarious feeling of shame ; yet there seems something to be said for the Provost and myself. A sardine is much smaller than the smallest trout we carried down the mountain, and we never yet heard of any one who lamented the capture of a sardine. Lest it be urged that the sardine is nourishing food, I mention that so are our small trout. For some reason known only in the kitchen, there is never much "on them" when they appear at breakfast ; but, like the mountain sheep of the old adage, they are of an especial sweetness.

It must not be supposed that the hill-stream trout are so easy to catch that

any one can take them at any time. The Provost and I fared well because we had chosen a day of fortunate conditions. The stream was full, and the atmosphere was volatile. Had the water been low or the weather sultry we should have failed. As things were, indeed, signs were not lacking that the fish of the hill streams share with the fish of the valleys those strange instincts which make angling a pastime so precarious. In the afternoon the Provost set off across the rocks and the heather to try a stream about a mile off. We were to meet where that water and the Moness joined, not far above the village. When again I saw him His Honour reported: "Not a trout, and not a nibble!" I myself had taken about a dozen fish since we had parted; but no doubt that was because, the store of worms having given out, I had been using flies. If I had used the Provost's bait I should have fared no better than he. This is important. If any one has an impression that mountain streams are not

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“sporting” in the ordinary sense, I should like to correct the thought. The day under review was not by any means my first on the waters of the uplands, and I know that the trout there are in their moods almost as much as any other trout subject to those subtle atmospheric influences which give a constant interest to the pursuit. It is not every day that you can fill your basket. Sometimes you will have a nibble or a rise almost at every cast; on other days rises or nibbles will be few. Never once have I found mountain trout taking flies indiscriminately. Always they show an unmistakable preference for one particular lure.

Does not this indicate that the hill streams are worth cultivating in the interest of the scientific angler? Surely it does. The trout, it is true, are small; but they are capable of becoming large. All trout, it would seem, are of the same race. Their size is merely a matter of feeding. That, in its turn, depends upon the nature of the stream. If the nature

of the stream changes, the size of the trout changes also. The Provost tells me that he used to fish in the Moness sixty years ago, and that then, while half-pounders and even pounders were not rare, the average weight of the fish was fully quarter-of-a-pound. He attributes the decline to the fact that in the old days the land through which the stream flows was largely under the plough, the water, consequently, having a supply of worms and grubs; and that, the land being out of tillage, the trout have now practically nothing but flies to feed upon. It would, of course, be economically unreasonable to call for ploughing of the moorlands in order that trout should flourish; but the Provost's remark, indubitably sanctioning the belief that the fish grow as they are fed, has an incidental significance of moment. There was a great abundance of aquatic insects on the Moness, and I have noticed the same plenty on many another mountain stream. If one may judge by the infrequency of

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trout-rises, however, the insects, as far as the fish are concerned, are almost wholly waste. In most places the streams are all rush and tumble, on which the flies, apparently, pass unseen. If there were long pools, with short rapids between them, the trout would grow large and fat upon the rich diet of insects. On the estate through which the Provost's burn flows there are at least a hundred similar streams. Others of the same kind in the Highlands and in Wales are very many. All are left neglected. When one thinks of the trouble and expense to which landowners go in order to make trout streams or trout ponds in the plains, this is astonishing. Certain modifications, easily to be contrived, would convert some of these mountain torrents into exceedingly good trout-streams.

This month, unless the weather is very unfavourable, the evening rise becomes

almost as regular as the setting of the sun. Commenting on an article describing it, a leader-writer in *The Evening Standard and St. James's Gazette* hinted a misgiving as to whether there is such a thing. That can be accounted for only by supposing that as an angler he has had extraordinarily bad luck. Any one who has more than once witnessed the evening rise will believe that it is the rule. The first experience, if thorough, is startling and stimulating enough to explain why those who take to trout-fishing never willingly lay the rod permanently aside.

I myself first saw the evening rise, and the fruits of it, on Clatto Loch, which lies among the southern hills of Fife. I had been at work assiduously all day, and had caught only three or four fish. The sun had been blazing, and there had been only faint and infrequent breezes. At sundown my companion and I, having a good bit to go, had beached the boat, taken down the rods, and were strolling demurely away. Suddenly we beheld a strange

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ongoing at the other side of the water near the narrow head of the lake. There, the rod much bent, was a fisherman running hither and thither in battle with a thumper. He landed the trout, and resumed. Immediately he was fast in another, which also was soon in the net. The same ceremony was gone through time after time; and at length, after watching in envious amazement for about half-an-hour, we went round to investigate. The basket on the grass was almost full of fish, none of them under half-a-pound, some of them apparently about two pounds; and the angler was still busy piling up the score! He laughed pleasantly at our incoherent astonishment. What flies? Why, just the ordinary Teal-drakes, one with a red body, one with a green, and one with a yellow; but it was the Teal-and-Red that was doing best. Soon afterwards, when, the night having quite closed in, the fisherman stopped, and we all left the loch for the valley to the north, through

which the railway runs, the basket was very heavy. It seemed to be little if at all under thirty pounds.

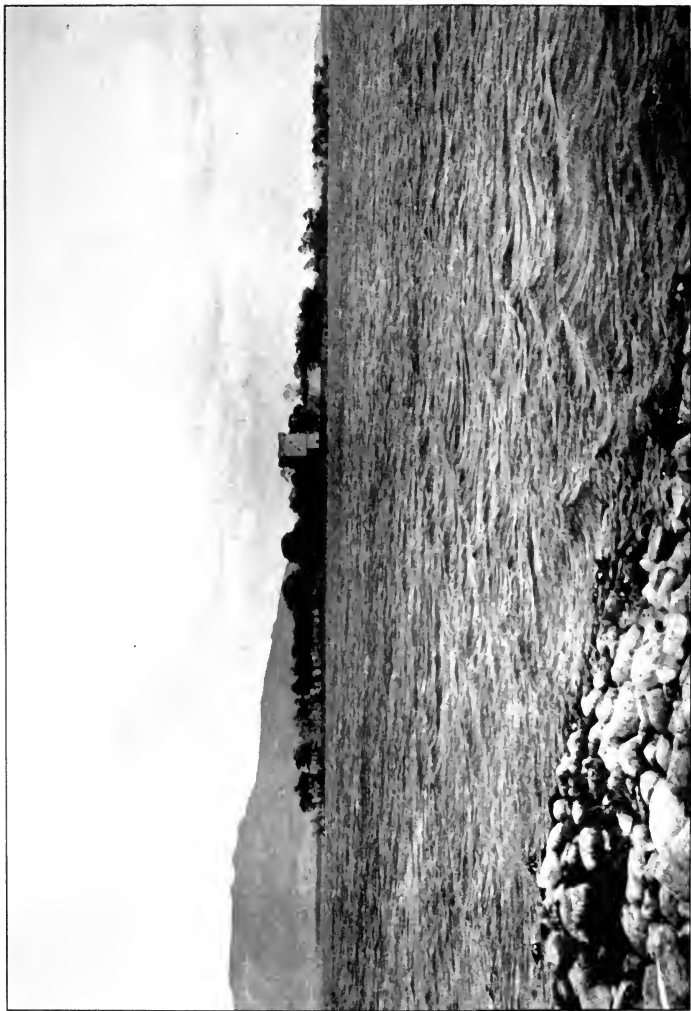
Experience, though it has not lessened the vividness of remembrance, has given to that incident a natural instead of a miraculous aspect. Next time we had the privilege of fishing on Clatto we went late in the afternoon, and no sooner had the sun dipped behind the hills than the trout began to rise. At first they had a marked preference for a particular fly, which, if I remember rightly, was the Teal-and-Green; but as the dusk deepened and colours became indistinct they sprang at all flies indiscriminately. Both of us frequently hooked more than a single fish at a cast, and one of us landed two at a time, each of them slightly over a pound. Wheresoever else I have thrown a fly, in Scotland or in England, I have found the same manifestation of Nature. I have known the trout rising so well that it was almost impossible to cast without having a fish at the lure instantly. The evening

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rise is neither a superstition nor a wilful fiction. It is a fact.

It is, however, far from being a simple fact. It is one of the most perplexing of the phenomena with which the trout-fisher is confronted.

The evening rise is not to be expected all the season through. There is no rise for a time at the beginning of the season, and none for a time towards the close. Throughout Great Britain the period during which the evening rise may be looked for varies with latitude. In the south of England it begins about the middle of April. The beginning, it may be roughly said, becomes later and later as you go north. When you have reached the Tay you need not expect the evening rise until near the close of May. Having crossed the Grampians, you enter upon what may be called a reactionary set of conditions. Then the level of the land begins to approximate gradually to that of the Lowlands, and the time of the trout-fishing season in the far north



P. D. Malloch.

LOCHLEVEN (*page 132*),
Ripple and Sky just right.



to approximate to that of the south. The period of the evening rise is curtailed by the approach of autumn, which also is determined by latitude. September, which is summer in the south of England, is often autumnal in Scotland. Trout-fishing closes earlier in England than in Scotland, just as it opens later; but why it opens later or closes earlier I do not know. Summer weather begins earlier in England, and lasts longer. That, if our laws were always inspired by the inarticulate hints of Nature, would result in the open season for trout being longer in the south than in the north. This, however, is a thought apart. The point is that both in England and in Scotland there is a time at the beginning of the season and a time towards the close during which there is no evening rise.

Thus far we have had comparatively plain sailing. Trout do not rise in the evening when they are only just "coming into condition," and they do not rise in

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the evening when they are about to go out of condition.

Our immediate problem concerns the period during which they are vigorous in health and appetite, the period during which an evening rise is always looked for. Why is it that sometimes, after toiling for hours without success, and after beginning late in the day to put increasing trust in the gloamin', one finds the dusk merging uneventfully into night? This does happen. Its happening inopportunately accounts, as has been indicated, for the scepticism which has occasionally been cast upon our theme.

I cannot solve the problem; but I can state a few suggestive facts. During the period of what may be roughly called summer, a period which varies with latitude and partly with the level of the land in relation to the sea, there will invariably, on any river or lake in Great Britain that holds trout, be a rise at and about sundown after a day that

has been hot, or seasonably warm, if the atmosphere is not electric and the sky is not thickly clouded and there is a dead calm or only a slight air. Amid any other set of conditions it is probable that there will be no evening rise. Why? I have a few thoughts in answer; but they are not convincing.

CHAPTER VI

JUNE

Lochleven—Its Puzzling Fish—Are they Seatrout?—
Why Worry?—The Scene at the Jetty—System of
Drifts—Punctual Flies—Dashing Trout—Fear and
Hope—“A Burst of Flies”—Thoughts on the
Weather—After all, a Good Day—A Strange Spec-
tacle—Is the Devil really Dead?—The Mayfly!

WITHIN forty minutes after passing through Edinburgh railway travellers to the Highlands catch a glimpse of water in an extensive plain. Though the lake is bounded on the east by the Lomonds and on the south by the Cleish Hills, the scenery is not so attractive as that through which the train will ere long be speeding; indeed, it is tame, and if the sky is dull it is depressing. Nevertheless, the lake is in one respect the most famous in the world. It is Lochleven,

native home of a race of trout such as are to be found nowhere else.

The fish are a puzzle to all who study them. Look at one in broad daylight just after it is out of the landing-net. Save that it is peculiarly well shaped and notably bright, it seems to be an ordinary brown-trout. Look at a basketful of the fish displayed on a lawn in the evening, and the earlier impression is instantly in doubt. The fish have a silvery hue; this actually seems to be luminous; it changes, as shot silk does, while you move and see it in various lights. These fish must be seatrout! Certain naturalists believe that they are. The theory is that long ago the lake was an arm of the sea, and that seatrout which happened to be in it at the time were landlocked by a seismic upheaval separating the fresh or brackish water from the salt. There are two considerations which tell against this surmise. One of them is that, whilst seatrout in general remain in good condition well into October,

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Lochleven trout fall markedly off before the end of August. The other is that failure has attended all attempts, howsoever scientifically conducted, to rear seatrout to maturity in fresh water. Still, there are facts which favour the surmise. Resembling seatrout in sheen and in shape, Lochleven trout resemble them in flavour also. Between a Lochleven trout and an ordinary trout there is in that regard as much difference as there is between an ordinary trout and a grayling. Whilst not less delicious to the taste, the Lochleven trout is richer. Besides, the "Lochleven trout" is not the only trout in the water. When your boat drifts upon the broad shallows towards the north-east of the lake one of the gillies gives you a warning. He says, "We may have a big yellow trout here." Should the warning be justified by the event, you will find that the fish is of a tribe distinctly different from that which gives celebrity to Lochleven. It is less shapely, and lacks the elusive

sheen ; it is, unmistakably, none other than an exceptionally fine brown-trout. This would seem to show that a trout does not become a Lochleven trout merely by living in Lochleven. The true Lochleven trout, in common with every other fish of the salmon kind, prefers to breed with his own race. It may be, after all, that he really is a scion of the seatrout.

Why worry about his pedigree when we might be thinking of having a bout with him ? June is the month of months for that fine ploy. Lochleven is then at its best. If you are a fairly competent fisherman the one possibility to be dreaded is that of adverse weather. You shall have only a trout or two, if any, when the atmosphere is fermenting into thunder, and, except in the lee of an island here or there, a boat on Lochleven is not easy to manage when the wind becomes more than half-a-gale ; but in June the atmosphere as a rule is still wholesome and the breezes have become

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light. In June you are much less likely than in any other month to hit upon a bad day. Even the direction of the wind, so important on many waters, does not matter much on Lochleven. An east wind, generally deplored elsewhere, is welcome. Wind from the east is nearly always steadier than wind from any other quarter, and that is a great advantage; being interrupted by the Fife hills, it is never too strong on Lochleven. In fact, most of the best baskets there are made when the breeze is from the east. The explanation, I think, is that it is the breeze with which the trout are most familiar. In summer the inland atmosphere is during daytime warmer than the atmosphere on the sea; and thus in daytime the breezes tend to be from the sea, which at Lochleven is on the east. Therefore the anglers gathered of a morning about the jetty at Kinross are never vexed when they are faced with an east wind. If the wind were from the west, they could begin fishing immedi-

ately after going off; but there will be no real loss of time in the two-hours row to the other side of the water.

Joyous is this scene at the jetty. To each angler, or to each two anglers, a particular boat has been allotted at the office, close by, and gillies step briskly along the jetty shouting *The Mary Seaton!* *The Mary Beaton!* and other names, now those of boats, which are picturesque in historical romance. Soon there is nobody about the jetty, and, so far as can be seen by anyone habituated to the short vistas of London, nobody on the water. The fleet is dispersed far and wide upon the lake, beyond the range of the unaccustomed eye.

This is not what would happen on an ordinary loch. On such a water the boats would be clinging to the shores. That is because ordinary lochs are shallow enough for trout-fishing only for a few yards from the land. Farther out than that most of them, in the Highlands, have depths greater, often much

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greater, than the average depth of the North Sea ; and trout, except occasionally in a dead calm, when they seem to have followed flies that have wandered from the shores, do not rise in the deeps. Lochleven, with fish of matchless beauty teeming, is all shallow. There is only about fifteen feet of water at the deepest part. Thus one can with reasonable hope cast flies anywhere on its surface. Thus, also, it gives scope and verge enough for as many anglers as could be accommodated on a dozen ordinary lochs of the same size, and it is never overcrowded.

The boats, however, have not distributed themselves at random. Ah, no ! The water is marked out in "drifts." If the anglers in any boat have no preference among these, the chief of the two gillies is sure to state a choice. Just as Queen Mary, when imprisoned on one of the islands, had signallings with trusty Anti-Roundheads on the shore, the gillies have an elaborate system of alignments,

and so can take you to the very drift where yesterday, or last season, or many years ago, some memorable basket was made.

Not a few trout have been creeled during our statement of the preliminary procedure. Some of the anglers who set out intending to begin at The Sluices, or at the base of the Lomonds, found cause to stop far short of that. They ran into the midst of a rise of fly. They discovered this through noticing a rise of trout. Many flies, even though large, escape the human vision. The Mayfly, which on most waters does not come out until June, is a remarkable instance. Though it is yellow, and almost as large as a butterfly, you are startled by the apparition. You know it must have been there, in the sunlight, for some time; yet you did not see it. It is so tenuous, so silent, so gentle, as to appear unreal; dawning upon you slowly, as it were, yet with such a thrill that the glowing air, the awaking Summer, seems to have

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given off a living and fluttering blossom. The Mayfly is not native to Lochleven; but that water has many flies not less to be desired. Some of them are so regular in arrival that at ten minutes to one o'clock or other highly specific time on a particular day you may notice the gillies peering into the water to see whether they are on the way up. Others are either less to be depended on or not so much the subject of ordered knowledge. That is why one has often the delight of coming unexpectedly upon a rise of fly and a rise of trout. This may be anywhere on Lochleven, no part of which is so deep as to prevent the breeding of insects.

When you do chance upon the inspiring activities, you see what the insects are and put on a cast of lures in imitation; to go farther for the sake of having a longer drift might be to lose the one opportunity of the day.

Especially if you have had experience on many waters, you then realise that

Lochleven trout are indubitably a class by themselves. Their manner of rising is different from that of any other fish that lives in fresh water all the year. An ordinary trout rising at a real fly is as a rule a symbol of leisurely and placid wild-life. He comes to the surface slowly, inhales the insect at his ease, and makes no more than a slowly-expanding dimple on the water. The Lochleven trout darts at the fly with great rapidity, and, though he does not often come into the air, he leaves the surface swirling. When you are facing the sun and the waves are high, you can actually see the wonderful movement. The trout coming at the lure is like a flash of light in the wave, which is sometimes blue, sometimes green. How he contrives to stop exactly when he touches the surface is more than can be told. If it is your own fly he has taken, he goes down with equal violence. Here again he differs from an ordinary trout, which sometimes, when hooked, pauses for a little, as if wondering what has

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happened and what is to be done next.

Often in accounts of angling we hear or read of the rod being "bent into a semi-circle." A struggle so severe as is thus indicated is not usual on an ordinary water; but it is the rule on Lochleven. The agile vigour of the fish is equalled only by that of the seatrout or the grilse. In common with those fish, the Lochleven trout has more brilliance than staying power in his fight. If you are cool enough to keep him in hand for two or three minutes, the victory is likely to be yours. He yields sooner than a brown trout would, or a rainbow of the same weight. Thus, notwithstanding the ferocity with which he tears the line from the reel, one has no reason to be more than usually apprehensive.

On a good day Lochleven will easily yield you twenty trout, weighing as many pounds, and there is always the possibility of a fish four or five times the average weight. Many an angler will own to

having had "a good day"; but none will unreservedly admit that he has ever had "a really good day." On an ordinary water the most eager angler is often satisfied when evening comes; but on Lochleven no angler ever is. The exceptional hope is never realised; but it is never quenched. Why should not you hope for a basket of 50 lb.? You cannot help hoping. Really, there must now and then be a day when the trout rise from morning until night as well as they often rise for an hour or so? If only we should chance upon it! One invariably puts in at the jetty with an exultant intuition that, good as the day has been, the morrow, or some day soon, will be indefinitely better. No angler ever quits the water avowedly for the last time. Lochleven has a spell.

Very early in the morning of a recent Monday it seemed that summer had arrived. A light breeze from the west-

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north-west bore scarcely any cloud, and the atmosphere was already warm. Mr. Wood and I were hastening by railroad to Lochleven. I myself was in high hope; but, beyond expecting a day of pleasant indolence on the water, my friend had no hope at all. My reason for good cheer was that a storm-centre had just passed. There had been rain on Saturday and a gale on Sunday; now the wind, much less strong, was still falling, and the mercury in the barometer was slowly rising. These, as I had often found, were the only conditions amid which trout were certain to feed. Mr. Wood's doctrine was that, though the conditions might be favourable on other waters, they were very bad on Lochleven. The fish there, he said, never rose when the sun shone brightly. Hubert Wood, who was with us, inclined towards the gloomy view. So, when we arrived at the Green Hotel, was Mr. Harris, who has known the lake for forty years. So was Miss White, in charge of the office at the pier, while we

looked over the array of fly-casts on her counter. So, in short, was every one but myself. "Would you like to go anywhere in particular?" asked the chief of our two boatmen, as we cast off. The question, in tones as melancholious as you can imagine, meant, "It doesn't matter where we go: we'll not see a trout to-day."

We went towards the shallows to the north of Queen Mary's Island. That course was taken because, there having been weeks of rain, the loch was high. Mr. Wood and Hubert trolled minnows on the way, and I myself cast flies. By the time we reached the shallows Hubert had caught a trout and a perch; the flies had not stirred a fish, and no rise had been seen. The first drift on the shallows was equally disappointing. It occupied half-an-hour, during which time we saw not a single rise. The boatmen suggested trolling again, and the minnows were let out. This was quite to my mind. It is true that you cannot cast flies comfort-

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ably when the boat is being rowed ; but there is sometimes a reason for wishing to move on a lake more quickly than the wind will take you. It is that, whilst the trout all through any water become disposed to take flies at the same time, the flies do not appear at all places simultaneously. This I knew to be peculiarly the case on Lochleven. On that water there is often what Mr. Harris calls a "burst of flies" over an area about an acre in extent, while there do not seem to be more than a few straggling insects outside the well-defined circle. I perceived, therefore, that if we moved quickly over the water we should increase our chance of discovering a region where insects and fish were rising.

This reasoning was justified. I had a rise about half-an-hour after the second issue of the minnows ; then, within a space of time scarcely more than is taken up by the writing of this sentence, another, another, and another ! All four trout, I grieve to say, were missed. My

excuse is that you are at a disadvantage when your first care is to prevent entanglement of the line with the oars. This handicap, of course, was quickly removed. Now that we were among rising trout, the trolling lines were hastily reeled in; and soon three fly-rods were at work. That was about one o'clock.

All went well thereafter. Soon my companions and the boatmen, all of whom had been sily chaffing at my theory about the weather, were smiling in another mode. Until six o'clock, when it was time to return to the pier, we were never very long without need for the services of a boatman and the landing-net. In the middle of the afternoon the less youthful gillie remembered that he had often known brisk sport in bright sunshine and a smart breeze! He was quite honest. The explanation is that acceptance of tradition had temporarily obscured facts within his knowledge. The average angler's belief in cloud is

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one of those superstitions which outstay generations of experience disproving them.

The truth, I think, is that neither cloud nor bright sunshine has a direct influence on the sport. Whether the sky is clear or it is clouded, the trout rise particularly well immediately after the passing of a storm. Only, the sky is usually either clear or but thinly veiled at that time, and usually there are thick clouds when a storm is impending and the fish are in the sulks.

That day I noticed, not for the first time, a very interesting peculiarity in the ways of trout. When the fish do rise under a heavy sky they come at the flies in a comparatively languid manner, and into the landing-net without much more ado; but just after a storm, when the atmosphere is fresh and brisk and buoyant, they rise with arrow-like directness and rapidity, and fight with dash. This seems to show that trout are as much as human beings, or even more

than these, invigorated by a renewal of the atmosphere.

Piqued by the "agreeable disappointment," Mr. Wood remarked that if "fair luck" had fallen to us our basket would have been very impressive. There could be no doubt on that score. My friend was not talking inconsiderately. Our percentage of missed rises had been unusually high. We missed at least thrice as many fish as we landed. That was because from the time we found ourselves among the feeding trout the sun was behind our backs, and thus, in the baffling light, the rises were not instantly visible. Had the wind been from the east, the percentage of misses would have been much smaller. Facing the light, we should have seen the fish darting at the lures through the waves; and I do believe that our basket would have been more than twice its actual dimensions. As things were, it was twenty-three trout, weighing 17 lb. Twenty - one other boats were out on the same day; nearly

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all of them brought in good baskets; the best basket, made by two anglers whose names I did not catch, was thirty-three trout, weighing 28 lb.

Next morning, when I left Kinross the hotel was in a hum of high expectancy. There was a fine breeze; the sky was overcast; a gentle rain had begun. Anglers, the hotel people, and the gillies were gleefully telling one another that this was to be the best day of the season. It was now my turn to be sceptical. I did not like the aspect of the weather; on looking at the morning journal I found, from the report of the Meteorological Office, that a fresh disturbance was approaching; the barometer showed that the atmospherical pressure had slightly decreased during the night. I thought that the general hope would not be fulfilled.

This was not wrong. Wednesday's newspapers reported that Tuesday's baskets had been much lighter than those of Monday. The day that to the

general understanding had looked hopeless had turned out to be one of the best of days, and that which promised to be the day of the season was distinctly poor.

One afternoon, while casting flies on a sluggish stretch of a trout stream, I noticed a man about a hundred yards off on the other side of the water. His head and shoulders, that is to say, were visible; the rest of him was screened by a thick fringe of reeds, over which a fishing-rod protruded. Suddenly the tip of the rod was sharply tilted; a trout was jerked out of the stream, and went hurtling through the sunshine to the meadow behind. Soon head and shoulders and the rod appeared again, and instantly another fish fluttered to the grass in a gleaming curve. The angler coming slowly downstream, this was repeated, repeated, repeated. Never had I witnessed such a strange performance. So

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astonishing was it, I could only stand and watch. What wizardry could the man be using? There was no clue. With a very short line, the angler, every time he came back from basketing a trout, dropped a lure upon the water just as one might have dropped a worm had the stream been flooded and discoloured; yet it could not be a worm he was plying. Before seizing a worm the trout usually waits until it is well below the surface; but in this case a fish leapt at the lure the moment it touched the water. Then, if one could forget some lady or another upset by the excitement of her first rise, who had ever seen trout so unceremoniously treated? The fellow did not play them. He merely struck, hooked, and tossed them out. How thick his cast must be! or, if the gut were as fine as is commonly deemed desirable, how marvellously strong! The fish he was catching were not small; they were, indeed, well above the local average. The least considerable seemed

to be about half-a-pound ; not a few were twice as large. Surely it was something uncanny I had chanced upon ? Though abounding in trout, the stream had the repute of being "difficult." Any angler resident in the neighbourhood thought himself skilful if a day's effort yielded him a dozen fish ; yet here was a person taking splendid trout at the rate of one a minute ! Awestruck, I questioned whether, as was made out in Mr. Reade's inspiring novel, through which I had been making my delighted way, the Devil were really dead. The extraordinary spectacle was a good many years ago, in school days, when theology is less impelling than curiosity ; and when at length the stranger was just opposite across the stream I made a polite request to be informed as to what he was fishing with.

"The Mayfly !" said he, so openly exultant in a human manner that faith in Mr. Reade was there and then restored. He invited me to go over the bridge and

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see his basket, a very capacious one, which I found to be packed to the brim ; gave me a Mayfly ; and went off to catch a train.

Anglers at large will not think of his doings with unanimous admiration. Some of them will disapprove severely. These are they who, after having banned the worm, the gentle, the creeper, and the minnow, are disposed towards banning the Mayfly also. They think that all these lures, even though suited to comparatively rare occasions, are too effective. Unfortunately, there is no great reason for their dread of the Mayfly. That beautiful creature fell upon evil days, which are not yet over. Its struggle for life is severe. It is far from being so ephemeral as it is called and seems. Two years elapse between the laying of the egg and the coming of the full-fledged insect. During that period its home is in or on the soil at the bottom of the water. It dies in any stream that is poisonously polluted. In

some cases it is unable to live even where the pollution is not poisonous. A very sad instance is to be witnessed in Kent, in which a naturally charming little stream, once alive with trout and Mayflies, is now destitute of both. Refuse from a mill forms a glutinous slime under which neither spawn of fish nor insects' eggs can thrive. Within the last five or six years, stimulated by the splendid example set on the Thames, public bodies and private persons in many parts of the United Kingdom have been taking measures against pollution, and that with no little success; but now, alas! the Mayfly is adversely affected by a well-meant reform of another kind. That is the Wild Birds Protection Act, in relation to which those who are concerned with justice and general prosperity out of doors, in wild life, are confronted by a problem exactly analogous to that which in various modes is continuously perplexing statesmen. How is the lot of one class to be improved without

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infliction of unjust injury on some other ? Nature is bafflingly intractable. Who could have foreseen that kindness to the birds, kindness which apparently amounted to no more than fair-play, would lead to gross cruelty to the Mayfly and to the trout ? That is what has happened. If each of us "ate like a bird," each of us would consume at least a quartern loaf, two legs of mutton, and a sirloin of beef every day. Think, then, of what has befallen the Mayflies in consequence of our highly successful legislation in behalf of the birds. Countless thousands are gobbled before their eggs are laid, before the trout have time to take a reasonable toll, before the pretty insects themselves have had an hour's experience of life in its completeness. Think, also, that one of the more exacting birds is none other than the kingfisher, now greatly multiplied, and realise how heartrendingly insoluble are the difficulties with which the statecraft of the streamside has to deal. As in

human society, so among the creatures of the wilds, often the mind of the observer is rent by a conflict between natural pity for the weak or the picturesque and a perception that measures to make the pity effective are certain to end in trouble and probably in injustice. At any rate, the Mayflies are at present a sorely subjugated race. While one does not hear of any stream on which they are as plentiful as they used to be, there are many streams on which they are becoming fewer, and some on which they are extinct.

That is why there can be no harm in having described the marvellous Mayfly fishing which was witnessed years ago. There is no fear that any one will be able to repeat it. On streams where the Mayfly is common the insect is relished by the fish more than any other dainty in their fare. It is so extraordinarily appetising that when it is abundant the very largest trout, which cannot be attracted by any other fly, come out of

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their holes and corners. They renew their youth, and are as rash as the incautious smolts. Still, what of that? On any water which has no rise of Mayflies imitations cannot be presented with success. Even where there is a rise, the insects, real or artificial, are forbidding to begin with. Until the flies have been on the water for a day or so, they scare the trout, which, instead of leaping at them, crouch or flee. Where there are only a few Mayflies, they seem to be not very exciting to the fish. Thus, opportunities to raise a trout whenever the lure touches the water have become rare.

Nevertheless, certain lessons may be learned from the incident which I have described. It was not only because he was fishing in one of the fat years that our memorable angler was so successful. It was also because he was working from behind a screen of reeds. That gave him an advantage similar to that which the Irish angler has when out

upon some lough in the fortnight of the Green Drake. There the lure is on a cast dangling from a line of floss-silk, a fluffy line, easily borne out upon the breeze; working with the wind, the angler can make the fly just touch the water and then go, touch and go, touch and go, as if it were laying eggs. That, at times, is a movement of the Mayfly which the trout cannot resist. Our own particular angler managed to imitate it merely because the screen of reeds enabled him, unseen, to dap his Mayfly perpendicularly. At other places he would have dapped in that way in vain.

A very entertaining fact is that all the trout in a stretch of water want Mayflies which are in a particular stage of their brief life in the air. When they are to be caught by dapping it is the perfect Mayfly that they want. At other times they seek the insect, just arrived or just arriving on the surface, with its wings still incompletely unfolded. Then the lure which will succeed is one

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with clinging hackles and without wings ; the hackles, if of the right colour, are very like the unopened wings. Again, sometimes it is the spent gnat that the fish desire. Then the appropriate lure is one with wings constructed so as to seem tattered and misshapen. How, it may be asked, are we to know which of the three patterns is befitting in any particular hour? Only by experiment. The trouts' preference for a particular pattern is, strangely, in despite of the fact that Mayflies in each of the three stages are on the water at the same time.



W. L. Wood, junior.

LOCHLEVEN (page 150).

At Queen Mary's Island ; Waiting for a Breeze.



CHAPTER VII

JULY

A Lull, apparently—Summer Languor—Not an Unbroken Rule—Worms are now In Season—A Full Basket—The Water-Level: in England and in Scotland—Mountain Lakes—A Day on Loch Ordie—Luxuriance of Nature on the Hills—Racial Differences among Trout—Some Highland Lochs—Red Trout and White Trout—Are Pike Objectionable?—Donald Sim—Henry Haxton—Lord Tullibardine—An Unrecorded Episode in the War with the South-African Republics.

SOME anglers think that trout, in common with flowers and song-birds, are at their best in spring. Of such was a damsel who said to me, just arrived in the Highlands and anxious to go out on a loch, "O yes, we'll go; but the fishing is now over for the year." As summer was still young, this was astonishing; but the lady held to her opinion. The game-keeper, she said, had told her that trout-

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fishing ended with May. Her belief prevails in quarters where you would least expect it. Only a few days ago a trader in tackle, in whose shop I was seeking flies, said, as he set out his cases, "Of course, there's very little use trying the river now." He was an angler, too! Was there warrant for his depressing remark? Well, there was a little. Just as the flower-garden becomes dowdy and the birds become silent before Midsummer Day, the trout in many places become languorous by the same time. This is particularly noticeable, and particularly explicable, on waters which have the Mayfly. After their fortnight's feeding on that most relished of all things in their fare, the fish seem to be out of appetite for a time. Besides, the languor overtakes many a water which is without the Mayfly. There also it becomes difficult to pile up a basket such as will cheer the heart of reasonably exacting man. To be sure, there are exceptions to this rule, excep-

tions so noteworthy that we must be cautious in our generalising. Think, for example, of Lochleven, which, after a long series of tame seasons, is now rejoicing its frequenters by sport so good as to make the best of the old-time records comparatively modest. Recently it has been not unusual to hear of well-nigh a thousand trout caught, by never more than forty-four anglers, on this wonderful loch in a day. Then, no angler in the south of England ever refrains from expecting fair sport in July or even in August. This fact, well based upon experience, is strange. One would naturally expect the trout of southern England, where summer is early, excessive, and prolonged, to be specially afflicted with languor; but that is not the case. In July and August they rise more freely than trout in any Scotch river do. As regards Scotland it cannot be denied that there is cause for the impression of our young hostess, the game-keeper, the tackle-dealer, and many

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others. On two waters out of each three, or thereby, sport with the trout certainly does fall off when the early flowers have faded and the birds have ceased to sing.

What is the meaning of this? Before endeavouring to show what it is, let us perceive what it is not. The phenomena in the trout waters have nothing to do with the vernal influence that produces the gentler iris and affects the young man's fancy. Spring is love-time with the birds and the flowers; but it is not so with the trout. It is in autumn that these have their season of amour. By May the impulse which flourishes into splendour in the flower-garden, and into music in the copses, is long past in the haunts of the trout, and it does not begin to stir again until October is well advanced. Thus, we must not seek consolation for our empty or ill-plenished creels in thoughts of a scientifically emotional kind. My friend Mr. Watson is a great poet, an illuminating interpreter

of the reign of law, a seer ; but he is not quite correct in saying that in May half of the world a bridegroom is and half of the world a bride. It is no bridal glee that makes the trout sportful in May. It is sheer gluttony. Before the starling and the nightingale are hushed, the trout are gorged. That is why, in effect, they say to the angler, "Owing to the pressure of other matter, we are obliged to decline your contribution." They cannot well hold any more. They are even unable to accept the offerings of what may be called the regular staff, Nature. You shall see this for yourself if you look upon a stream. There go, fluttering or floating down, alders, black spinners, grey gnats, oak flies, Welshman's buttons, sedge flies, willow flies, and other insects, too many to be named ; and not one in a thousand is taken. Here again, however, we must beware of generalising. In fact, we must seem to contradict ourselves. That is not our fault. It is because the ways of the trout are not

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to be understood, or even seen, at a glance. It is true that he is gorged this month; but it is necessary to discriminate. He cannot take many more flies; but there is something for which he will eagerly endeavour to find space. That is a worm, small and daintily pink or purple. Do you ask why this appeals to him? If so, think why it is that we Britons, who would not for a high fee eat the roe of our own salmon, are pleased whenever that of the Russian sturgeon is on the table. We take the caviare because it is ill to come by. It is probably for the same reason that the trout at midsummer takes a worm. At that time of the year worms are well down in the soil, which near the surface is too dry to be comfortable; thus there are few, if any, washed into the streams in the process of Nature. The one which you yourself offer may be the only worm within a mile. It has the attractiveness of things exotic.

If you ply that worm skilfully, you

shall have no cause to complain that the trout are languid. The condition is not easily fulfilled. A fly, or two flies, or even three, can be cast so far that, using ordinary caution, you do not come within the trout's range of vision; but if you toss a worm as sharply as you cast a fly the bait will leave the hook. Hook, observe! A single hook, and that small, instead of a Stewart tackle, which is a flight of three hooks, is to be commended. It leaves the lure comparatively untrammelled, and therefore the more effective. Deftly dropped near where a trout is lying, a worm at this time of the year, unless a thunderstorm is coming, will as a rule be rushed at. I am old-fashioned enough, as they would say in the *Quarterly Review*, either the blue or the buff, to be joyful at that great moment. Worm-fishing is tabooed on many streams; but the objection cannot be sustained. A nibble at a worm is at least as exciting as a rise at a fly. The rise is over and done with, one way

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or the other, in less than a second; but the nibble may go on for four or five seconds, and each of these is as a thrilling minute. Is the trout a fingerling or a five-pounder? When, O when, should we strike? I know not; nobody knows! Occasionally the trout is only chivying the worm, which is not within his lips for more than a small fraction of a second at a time; in that case the success or the failure of the strike is accidental. Occasionally the worm has been seized; in that case the strike, though again on chance, will, if in time, be effective. The great question is that of timing, and it is not soluble on any scientific principle. In fly-fishing you strike whenever you see or feel a rise; in worm-fishing your mind is rent in a conflict between anxiety not to be too quick and dread lest you should be too cautious. That is to say, the inhibitory nerves and the other set, the name of which I forget, are in full blast at the same time. This is moral and intellectual discipline of a beneficent

kind. All men in sound health have a natural liking for the bow and spear, or other weapon of the chase ; and what all sane men feel to be natural no man can with assurance denounce as perverse.

Meanwhile, since we took to the worm, our basket has been filling ; and what is this we see ? The sun has set, and the breeze has dropped, and the stream is aboil with rises ! Have we once more to go back upon the track of our assertions ? Indeed we have ! Though at the height of summer the trout are indifferent towards flies in daytime, always, when the atmosphere is fresh, as was stated in May, they rise uncommonly well between sunset and midnight. In fact, they rise as briskly throughout these hours as they do at mid-day in April. What, then, on analysis of the belief of our young friend and the gamekeeper and the tackle-dealer, do we find to be the truth ? Only that during the hours of sunshine the trout tend to ignore flies between the close of spring and the first

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flood in August. That is a frail basis on which to assume that the season ended with May. Why, we are in July, and our basket is packed to the brim !

In England, where the water-level, never high, is gradually becoming very low, nobody would think of going uphill in search of trout. Instinctively one realises that there cannot be a lake among the hills of Hampshire, for example, or on the Sussex downs. Surrey is equally ill-off. Its best bit of uplands is without even a considerable pool. This peculiarity of the southern part of Great Britain is due to the isolation of the eminences. If Surrey had a cluster of Leith Hills, instead of having only the solitary mount, it would have a lake somewhere near the clouds when the barometer and the sky are low. Great tracts of Scotland are bounteously enriched by water stored far above the ordinary haunts of men ; yet this is known only to a few. Let

the wayfarer leave the beaten track and climb far enough ; and suddenly, just as he sees over some ridge, he will find, with wonder and delight, a lake lying before him ; and always, especially if there be sunshine, it is of extraordinary beauty. In scarcely any part of the Highlands do you need a guide or a divining-rod to lead you to water among the hills. That is because the hills of the Highlands are in clusters. They are only semi-detached ; hollows or plateaus lie between the shoulders of one and those of another or of others ; and there, fed by sparkling rills that begin in corries near the peaks, lie, like huge gems, the mountain lakes. There are so many of them that it is questionable whether their number is truly given in the most painstaking of official surveys. A gamekeeper who accompanied us to the one most recently visited thought that there were about fifty lakes on the estate ; but he was not sure. "Maybe," he added after reflecting for a few

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moments, "there are half-a-dozen or so more than that."

This was in Atholl. The lake was Loch Ordie, about four miles uphill from Guay, a village on the Highland Line. It is circular, and three miles in circumference; and through a gap in the fringe of pines surrounding it there were to be seen, deceptively on a level with the eyes, snow-drifts in corries away to the north. This will indicate that on a sweltering summer day, when trout and anglers in the lowlands are languid and dejected, a mountain lake is a pleasant resort. Fain would I weave words into a pattern suggesting the general loveliness of Loch Ordie as a decoration of the brown old earth; but that cannot be. The moment you begin to be active as an angler you bid good-bye to yourself as an impressionist. The trout, if you are to catch a few, claim your undivided attention. Prose, then, stark prose, follows our ascent into the Atholl hills.

The sky was cloudless; but there was

a brisk wind from the north-west, and the trout rose well. By six o'clock in the afternoon, when we had to leave, the two of us had caught twenty-seven. Seven of the fish were almost exactly 1 lb. each. We had not been fortunate as regards the size of our trout. A game-book lying in the luncheon-room showed that the average weight of the trout taken on Loch Ordie was considerably above that of those in our own basket. It was slightly over $\frac{3}{4}$ lb., which is as good as the average of Lochleven this season, a record year on that splendid water. Trout up to 3 lb. had often been caught. Besides, the gamekeeper mentioned that a few days before our visit, in netting pike, he had taken from a small bay, and of course returned, fifty trout weighing not less than 2 lb. each.

Is it astonishing to find such good fish so far above the level of the sea? At first it is. One thinks that the world should become bleak and infertile when one quits the vales. This, however, is a

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false preconception of the ways of Nature. It is not only in the lowlands that she is competent and prolific. There is luxuriance of life, in many kinds, up to nearly 3000 feet above the sea. This richness does not taper off as you approach the limit. It seems to be uniform until it suddenly ceases altogether and you enter upon altitudes frequented by the ptarmigan and the eagle only. Insects abound wherever within the limit there is water. Much to the delighted excitement of the birds, even the Mayfly, which is known as the June-fly in the lowlands of Scotland, and as the Sloop in regions where summer is still later, was fluttering about the margins of Loch Ordie; and now and then, at intervals of an hour or so, there were rises of other insects, and consequently rises of the trout. Even as the insects were late in the year, the fish were backward in condition; but what of that? It enables the angler to believe, in common with the Poet Laureate and

the learned writers who discourse about the woodlands and the garden, that the present time, whatever it may be, is the best of all the year. It is very good in itself, and still better in what it is leading to. This incontrovertible proposition establishes harmony between these presents and our remark that May was undoubtedly the briskest month in the angler's season. In spring the angler thinks in terms of the valley; but in summer, like Lady Breadalbane when it is time to see to the red deer of the Black Mount, he lifts his eyes and himself unto the hills. Surely it is well to know that there are waters in which the trout are as lively in the months of summer as those of other waters are in May! The angler who has the privilege of them can keep company with spring until the first hint of autumn, which comes in a north-west wind at the close of the mid-August rainstorm, revives the lakes and rivers of the valleys.

Deeply interesting are the discoveries

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he will make. He will find that no water which is unconnected with another has trout exactly the same as those of any other. The fish in each lake have some marked individuality. This may be in colour, in shape, in size, in manner of rising, or in the vigour with which they endeavour to win free. The Loch Ordie trout, for example, turns on its back before seizing a fly, just as a shark turns when about to take its prey; this is an action I have never witnessed in any other water. Then, for further example, there is the problem presented by the internal colouring of fish. Some trout are red when they appear on the table, and some are so pallid to be almost white. It is generally supposed that the red trout are those which have had the richer fare, and that the others also would be red had they not been always on the verge of hunger. This theory, which nobody seems to question, is not convincing when we contemplate the phenomena to be explained. Within a



W. L. Wood, junior.

1. LOCH ORDIE IN A FAIR BREEZE (*page 172*).

2. THE SOUTH-WEST CORNER, WHERE DONALD DWELLS.

four-hours tramp of Loch Ordie there are Loch Derculich, Loch-na-Craig, Loch Oyl and Loch Kennard, both near Loch-na-Craig, and Loch Skiach, on Kinnaird. All these waters are approximately on the same high level, and in all of them the trout are red. On the other hand, Loch Doine, Loch Voil, Loch Lubnaig, and Loch Tay, in the same county, and Loch-an-Beie, just over the border in Argyll, lie low, not much above the sea; and the trout in all of them are pale. How is the difference to be accounted for? Does it show that feeding is better on the hills than in the vales? It might indeed be thought to do so were there not a disturbing consideration. The mountain trout, ruddy though they be, are not so game as the white trout in the lochs below. What are we to make of it? Are we, after all, to think that the better feeding is on the hills? We could not think that without thinking also that rich fare makes trout comparatively feeble. Are we to think that the better

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feeding is in the valleys? As the red trout, though not always the best to catch, are always the best to eat, we could not think that without thinking also that the more well-nourished a trout is the less palatable it becomes.

A more important problem may arise on even a cursory experience of sport on Highland lochs. Are pike objectionable in a trout water? Here again anglers in general are in no doubt. If you would have trout, you must destroy the pike. That is the general understanding. It is taken to be a self-evident proposition. That is exactly what it is not. Pike undoubtedly prey upon trout; but the best trout are to be caught in waters which are haunted by pike. Look at the facts in the fairly-representative region about which we are thinking. Loch Doine, Loch Voil, Loch Lubnaig, and Loch-an-Beie are without pike; and on any of these waters it is easy in a good day to catch forty trout, which will weigh 10 lb. Pike are plentiful in Loch

Ordie, Loch Skiach, Loch Derculich, Loch Tay, and Loch Vennachar ; on any of which waters, on a similar day, your basket may not only have as many trout, but also trout which are at least double the weight. These facts call for a reconsideration of the relations between trout and pike.

Perhaps those who share the general prejudice against pike will deem the scope of the reference too narrow. They may invite attention to Blagdon Lake, which, whilst without pike, yields trout that on the average are much heavier than the trout taken from any other lake in the country. Blagdon, however, is irrelevant. It is a new lake, artificial ; and waters of that kind have a natural history which, though uniform and peculiarly definite, has not yet been generally noticed. For the first four or five years the trout in any lake made by man flourish abnormally. They grow with great rapidity ; when three years old they are twice as large as trout of

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the same age in natural lakes ; and, being young, they rise as freely as other young trout do. That is because the soil on which they live is soil which has until recently been open to the air, soil swarming with worms, caterpillars, and other succulent creatures, too many to be mentioned, which are not indigenous to a natural lake. The trout feed on these tit-bits until the supply is exhausted. That is about the fifth year ; and then the average weight of the fish begins to decline towards uniformity with the average weight of the fish in the neighbourhood. The process has been witnessed on Lake Vyrnwy, and it will ere long be manifest on Blagdon.

The Highland lochs of which we have been thinking are not subject to any such falsifying departure from the normal order. All of them are natural. In all of them Nature is at work according to her ordinary rules. The two sets of facts which she produces are confusing. We take the best baskets of trout from

waters which have pike ; but, as will be seen immediately, we have no encouragement to plant pike in waters which have trout only. It is easy to understand why a lake which has pike yields trout which on the average are larger than those caught in a similar lake without pike. Many thousands of very young trout are devoured in the one water, and many thousands of very young trout are left to rush at our flies in the other. Explaining the humble average size of trout taken from the pikeless lakes, that solves half of our problem ; but it leaves us without any light whatever on the other half. As is known by every one who trolls a minnow in the intervals of casting flies, the lakes which are without pike have huge trout ; but where the pike are not, only the comparatively small trout rise ! The same mysterious law is seen in another aspect through the fact that on a pike-haunted lake you will catch with fly as many trout of 1 lb. or over in a day as you can by the same

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means take from a pikeless lake in a month. That is the puzzle. That is what confounds what Mr. Ruskin calls the imagination analytic. According to natural understanding, trout of 1 lb. or so, which are old enough to be wary but not too old to be tired of flies, should rise most freely where pike are absent; yet, whilst there they hardly ever rise at all, they rise particularly well where their natural enemies are constantly on the watch! Is this an argument for planting pike in waters where Nature has left them out? Certainly it is not. Some who thought it was have been painfully undeceived. Nature knows the ideally perfect relations between trout and pike, and in many a place contrives to maintain them from century to century; but man is not yet able to make successful experiments in the mysterious domain. Disaster is the outcome of any attempt to improve a stock of trout by introducing a pack of pike. The trout disappear from the

bottom as well as from the face of the water.

Gamekeepers are as a rule delightful companions. Our visit to Loch Ordie would be memorable if only in respect that it led to our making the acquaintance of two singularly interesting representatives of the class. These are Donald Sim and Henry Haxton.

On our reaching the loch, about half-past ten in the morning, Donald was not to be found. Disturbing to ourselves, impatient to be out upon the water, this was doubly so to Haxton, who said that Donald had received orders to be ready not later than ten. There is a row of picturesque cottages close to the jetty: the home of a forester, the home of Donald and Mrs. Sim, and a "fishing-house." On making inquiry, Haxton learned that Donald had gone out, to see to the foxes, at "the back of five." It was true that when after foxes Donald was never in a hurry to return; but, even

if he should not be noticing the time, he was sure to be home for his dinner, at eleven o'clock. O, well, we would set forth without Donald. . . . By and by, from the boat, I caught sight of a tall and erect figure walking with remarkable rapidity along a path through the woodlands which skirt the loch. "That's Donald," Haxton said. We drew ashore, and Donald came cheerfully aboard. He gave some explanation of his being late; but I did not hear it. I was preoccupied with the fact that this very youthful gillie was on the verge of his eightieth year. All day, joking and laughing and chatting, he was as keen on the sport as if he had been a schoolboy. The eastern half of the loch was catching the full force of the wind, which was high, and it must have been by no small strength that the boat was kept under control; but the eastern half, Donald thought, was where the best trout were likely to be rising, and consequently it had the drifts we must "stick to." He spared no effort;

indeed, he seemed not to be conscious of any. The dear old boy had been living there, in uplands that cannot be seen from any valley, for fifty years. Long may he be "after the foxes" and gleefully attending to his other duties !

Haxton was in many respects different from Donald. He was apparently little more than thirty years of age. He is not a Highlander, and, though very attentive, he had no ebullience of spirits or of speech. He hardly ever, except in answer, made any remark ; but when he did there was always something arresting in what he said. Thus, when we nearly bumped upon a submerged rock, and he mentioned that at that place General Lyttelton had caught a three-pounder, he spoke in a tone which unconsciously suggested that the distinguished soldier was a familiar acquaintance. In short, I felt that Haxton was no ordinary man ; and months afterwards I accidentally learned that I had not been wrong. Haxton, the meekest and mildest of

gamekeepers, is nothing less than a hero of the battlefield.

To set him in a true light, I must sketch an unrecorded episode in our war with the South-African Republics.

Two squadrons of the Scottish Horse had been out on trek for a time which was much too long. It was many a week since they had been near a railway; the men were ill-clothed, ill-fed, in general out-of-sorts. Most of their old officers had been killed or wounded, and they were away from Lord Tullibardine's control. Between them and the Column Commander, who was new to his post, there was some little lack of understanding.

Report says that, hearing about this, the Officer Commanding the Scottish Horse, of which there were three regiments, warned Lord Kitchener that trouble was not improbable. Thereupon, and acting upon a hint received from the men themselves that things were wrong, he galloped eighty miles in a day to see

them. He had sixty Australians with him, and on the way captured a Boer remount camp with 150 serviceable horses.

The column was found to be in a miserable state; and the disaffection was not clearly attributable in the first instance to the men. The Officer Commanding had a concert that night, and so waked them up. Also, he urged them not to allow discontent to grow. He knew their troubles, he said, and would be actively sympathetic as long as they played the game. Most of the men were of those who had fought so well under Benson; but a good many had joined since then, and these, naturally, were softer than their comrades. It was with the new men that the danger lay. They did not yet know the Officer Commanding personally, and they had not acquired the spirit of the corps. New clothing was issued, and the affair seemed to be going well; but, alas, there was a breakdown. A good many troopers,

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all of them in the two squadrons mentioned at the opening of our narrative, refused to go out again. This was at Standerton.

The Officer Commanding immediately put Major Blair, his second-in-command and an experienced officer, in charge of the men at Standerton. Almost immediately after entering upon this duty, Major Blair reported, by telegraph, that there was open mutiny. He had put under arrest all the non-commissioned officers except one. He asked his chief to come down.

Lord Tullibardine did go down, and found that officers and men were at loggerheads. Hoping to overcome the trouble, he sent all the officers away on leave. Then he paraded the men, and had a long talk with them. His anxiety was to make them realise that they were mutinous, and that mutiny was a crime of the gravest kind.

The men could not agree with his definition of their attitude. Denying

that they were mutinous, they said they were "on strike." They were striking because the non-commissioned officers had been put under arrest, and they would go on striking until those officers should be let out.

This declaration, it is believed, found a soft spot. The strikers were essentially good men; if they had been less good they might have taken an attitude more nearly approaching formal correctness.

However, sentiment had to be concealed and discipline enforced. Lord Tullibardine simply said to the men that every day the strike went on was only another stitch in the blanket of the non-commissioned officers. If they would leave off striking, he would see what he could do for their comrades under arrest.

In further conversation the men assured Lord Tullibardine of their loyalty to himself and to the regiment. Then they repeated their earlier grievances, which included a complaint that the

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Column Commander did not yet know them sufficiently well.

Next day Lord Tullibardine again paraded the men, who intimated that they were firm on the question of the strike. They said that they were going to write to *The Times* and to Lord Kitchener; some of them, indeed, had written to Lord Kitchener already.

Lord Tullibardine answered that they would have been wiser had they trusted to him.

They said that they were suffering from a breach of contract. This was a fresh grievance, and it was possible to perceive that it was not quite unfounded. The terms of enlistment, framed by the home authorities, had been ambiguous. "For a year or for the duration of the war" was not good wording. Men might honestly understand it to mean that they were free to go home after serving for a year.

Lord Tullibardine explained the real meaning of the terms; which was that

if the war lasted less than a year the men would have maintenance for the year, but that in any case they were enlisted for the duration of the war.

This was convincing; but it did not conciliate.

Consequently, Lord Tullibardine went up - country to confer with Lord Kitchener.

It is believed that at first the Commander-in-Chief was inclined to settle the trouble by having the men sent home, but that the Officer Commanding dissuaded him from that course by showing that it would be attended by a risk that others among the fifty thousand yeomanry in the field might strike in order to have themselves disbanded. At any rate, it is known that Lord Tullibardine ended the interview by asking for full powers. Might he come back to report in two or three days?

"Yes," said Lord Kitchener: "go and see what you can do."

Accordingly, Lord Tullibardine went

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to consult General Clements, who was commanding the district in which the mutinous troops were stationed.

The General took Lord Tullibardine's point of view, but made a disquieting suggestion. "The best plan," said he, "is to march down a couple of battalions and disarm them."

The Officer Commanding was considerably put out of countenance. It is said that he exclaimed, "I can disarm my own men by myself."

After further debate, the General and the Officer Commanding set out upon a joint attempt at pacification. They found the men in extremely bad temper. The Officer Commanding had taken with him twenty men from his own squadron. These were by way of going out to another column, and, to prevent suspicion, were kept pretty well in the background. The strikers were paraded, to be given a third chance. They had fallen-in in their shirt-sleeves, but with their arms. "You need not bother with

your arms," said the Officer Commanding: "just leave them there. The General wants to talk to you." The men, of whom there were ninety, obeyed. They were always very good on parade; never mutinous against the Officer Commanding personally. General Clements spoke to them just as Lord Tullibardine had spoken; but he pleaded in vain. The men refused to leave off striking unless the non-commissioned officers were set free. The General then proceeded to command those who meant to remain loyal to take a step forward; but the Officer Commanding interrupted, saying, "Rather tell every man who means to mutiny to step forward." In response to the command thus amended, all the men save one stepped forward without hesitation or a murmur. They had been told that if they mutinied they might be shot.

The General was aghast. "Lord Tullibardine," said he, "you know what to do."

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“Yes,” said Lord Tullibardine; and, turning to the men, “You have only yourselves to thank. Half-sections right, into jail! Quick march!”

The men set out towards the jail, round which, about quarter-of-a-mile away, was a fence of barbed wire. Then the Officer Commanding blew a whistle, and suddenly, out of a ditch close by, there sprang a row of infantry with loaded rifles and fixed bayonets.

The Officer Commanding went down to camp.

Very soon he was followed thither by a message from the men whom he had been reluctantly obliged to imprison. It was raining heavily: might they have tents? The Officer Commanding answered that they were now under the Provost-Marshal; that the tents belonged to the Scottish Horse; and that he had no power to hand them over. A little later the prisoners sent intimation that they were without rations. “You must complain to the Provost-Marshal,” the

Officer Commanding answered. "I can indent only for twenty-three men—the number in camp besides myself." He added that, as the men had preferred Lord Kitchener's friendship to his own, any further communications that might be deemed necessary should be addressed to the Commander-in-Chief.

Next day the court-martial was to begin. The Officer Commanding had provided himself with much "blue paper," including many quires of foolscap, envelopes of great length, and apparently all the ominous books he could lay hands on. At sight of him thus equipped, one man intimated a desire to back out of the strike; but the men generally were not yet overawed. The C.O.'s bark was much worse than his bite would be, they seemed to feel. At any rate, many of them practically insisted that, besides being Prosecutor, he should be witness as to character and, one might almost say, Counsel for the Defence. Man after man sought

the Officer's advice as to what should be pleaded in vindication of his conduct. "Would it be any use mentioning that I'm a Free Mason?" asked one. "No," the Prosecutor had to answer. "That would only make things worse. It would bring to light the fact that you have broken a second oath of loyalty to the Sovereign." Another man had a wife and two bairns at home. "You should have thought of that before," said the Prosecutor. "Nae doobt," moaned the prisoner; "but I'm sure that if there's anything your Lordship can do to help me, you'll do it?" "Yes," said Counsel for the Defence, looking gravely sympathetic: "I'll take home to your family any message you entrust to me."

Nevertheless, although the Blue-Paper demonstration was a failure, the court-martial was all right. The Lance-Corporals were taken first. They were sentenced to about a year's imprisonment. Parading the men, the Officer Commanding read out the sentence; offered them

a chance of coming in ; and pointed out that he had begun with the younger troopers, whose punishment would be the lightest. Three or four men came in.

Then the Officer Commanding took the Corporals, who were sentenced on the rising scale he had foreshadowed. Ten or twelve men came in.

Next one of the Sergeants appeared before the judgment seat, and was awarded three years. More men came in.

Then another Sergeant was found to be deserving of very heavy punishment ; but the question of what the sentence should be called for more deliberation than could be given to it there and then. Perhaps it was thought that a little suspense would have a good moral effect on the men still to be tried. At any rate, the President adjourned the Court, and it was understood that Lord Tullibardine went to see the Commander-in-Chief.

Putting two and two together, and especially when pondering Lord Tulli-

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bardine's remark that in so grave a case General Clements must consult Lord Kitchener, the men expected the Sergeant's sentence to be Death.

They were of a subdued aspect when, next day, Lord Tullibardine reported that he had been interceding with the Commander-in-Chief, who had yielded to a plea for mercy. The sentence was five years. A sigh of relief ran through the ranks.

Then the Officer Commanding announced that on the morrow he would go on to men much worse than the non-commissioned officers, who, after all, had been little more than insubordinate, and might only have been reduced had their comrades not behaved as silly children. Had they really, he asked, thought that they could score off him? Had they imagined that he was to be beaten by his own men? Perhaps at that moment some of them were thinking of their arrangements to discredit him at home? Well, had they never heard of the Press Censor?

Taking from his pocket a handful of missives and a handful of coins, and throwing them all on the ground, "There," said he, "are your letters to *The Times*, and your telegrams, and the money that was to pay for them!" They had done their best, he went on, to hurt the honour of the regiment; they had shamed themselves, their relations, and their country. Then, quieting down, the Officer Commanding said: "If you trust me, I will be your best friend. Do you wish to be left to Lord Kitchener? Or will you place yourselves unreservedly in my hands?"

"Yes!"

It seemed that all of them said "Yes!"

"Those who are willing to play the game, step forward!"

All but nine responded. These nine, it was soon afterwards found, were youths who had just recently been taken into the regiment; they did not yet realise the gravity of the situation.

"Will you take my award, or a court-

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martial?" asked Lord Tullibardine of the others.

Very readily they expressed a preference for the award.

"Well, then, it is fourteen days' imprisonment. It will be entered in your records; but, as you have done fourteen days already, you start clear to-morrow morning. All it will mean is that you have lost fourteen days' pay."

Then the Officer Commanding made a speech. He told the men that, as their own regiment was ready to cut their throats, he was going to send them up to the First Regiment. He hoped that there they would show themselves of use. From their behaviour on trek there had arisen an impression that they had lost spirit on account of Baakenlagte, and that they couldn't fight and wouldn't go. "We have something to put right," he said; "and I will give you your chance."

The chance arose soon after the men had been taken to the First Regi-

ment. The Boers were in strength on a rocky ridge. Lord Tullibardine detached from the regiment a squadron almost wholly composed of the men lately in mutiny, and, himself at their head, gave the order to attack. Gallantly the squadron galloped up the hill; but the Boers, though twice as strong as the Scots, did not stand. After firing a volley or so, they cleared. The scrap, however, was not in vain. It enabled the squadron to raise their tail, and their tail was up while the war lasted.

Now, it will be remembered that there was one non-commissioned officer who had not been put under arrest. That man was true to duty all through the trouble. While there was a chance that expostulation might avail, he went for the disaffected troopers right and left. As the Officer Commanding perceived with much anxiety, this man ran a constant risk of paying for his fidelity by being lynched.

Who was he that thus went about

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with his life in his hands rather than be cowed into tarnishing the traditions of his regiment ?

None other than Sergeant Haxton ; Haxton, whose acquaintance we made at Loch Ordie ; Henry the meek and mild !

He was an under gamekeeper in the Lowlands before the war. Now he is a head gamekeeper in Atholl, in connexion with the management of which Lord Tullibardine advises his father, the Duke.



W. & D. Lowrey.

THE MARQUIS OF TULLIBARDINE, M.V.O., D.S.O.

CHAPTER VIII

AUGUST

On Loch Moraig—Unreasonable Discontent—The Time for Midges—Varieties of the Midge—Seatrout and Salmon—Mr. Senior's Saying—The Lammas Flood—West-coast Rivers and East-coast Rivers—Why their Seasons are Not Simultaneous—The Influence of Nature—Man's Interference.

“TROUT? I tell you, we know nothing about them!”

That was how a friend who the other evening had come off Loch Moraig with a basket of thirty-three fish wound up an account of the day.

He had been happy until the narrative brought him to a certain hour. The trout had liked his flies until six o'clock. Then they had stopped. They had not ceased to feed. On the contrary, their rising at natural flies had become brisk.

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Thinking that this was because of a small white insect that had come out in myriads, he had put on a small white lure; but it was useless. Not a fish would look at it. He had come ashore at eight o'clock. He would not have thought much about the matter had not another angler, heavily burdened by his basket, entered the inn shortly before eleven o'clock reporting that between eight and ten the trout had taken ordinary flies unusually well, and that the hours of dusk had been the best of the day. The question was, Why had artificial flies been ignored between six and eight?

Meekly I suggested that perhaps neither of the anglers had tried the right midge. Always at this time of the year, I reasoned, there were black midges and dun midges on the water for two hours or so before dark; and it was probably either a black or a dun midge, instead of a white one, that had attracted the trout. Surely the bill-of-fare for a summer day was well known: ordinary flies while the

sun is up, midges for about two hours when it has dipped behind the hills, and ordinary flies or flies still larger after that?

The reminder calmed my friend, whose outburst was no more than a symptom of the experienced angler's insatiable curiosity about whys and wherefores.

We are now entering upon a time which each year gives much scope for this inquiring spirit. A good deal is known about brown trout and their ways; but of seatrout and salmon knowledge in the same measure is to seek. Usually you can explain the capture of a brown trout. The lure was something, or an imitation of something, that was naturally desirable at the moment. Even when you fail in the attempt to catch a brown trout, an explanation is as a rule at hand. It is that, whilst the lure is opportune, the state of the weather, or that of the water, is such that the fish are off their food. In short, as regards the brown trout, which are with us,

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inland, all the year, we have a natural science; but what we know of the fish that spend half of their time in the sea is knowledge of another kind, empirical. Between a seatrout or a salmon in the stream and the same fish in the basket there is no relation of cause and effect that you can perceive to have been morally certain or even probable. The capture was a great event; but it was essentially accidental. You do not understand it as you understand the capture of a brown trout. At least, as a rule you do not. When there really is a glimmer of rationality in the triumph we owe our pride of mind to some lesson that has been taught by haphazard experiment not connected with any study of natural law.

As was said by Mr. William Senior in a moment of comical candour, angling for salmon or for seatrout "is an art, but not a fine art." The lures for brown trout are taken or copied from nature; but such skill as we have in the capture

of seatrout or salmon is the result of accidents. Each of the many standard flies was a bow at a venture when first designed. Not one was copied from nature. Does this consideration take away from enjoyment of the sport? Surely it does not. Rather, it enriches the enjoyment. It is wonderful to think that without the slightest guidance we have designed many "flies" for which the migratory fish show specific likings. Of these likings, which are sometimes asserted dramatically, there can be no doubt whatever. One cannot always, it is true, be sure that the fly one has chosen is the best for the day; but there are a few rough general rules. Early in spring and late in autumn the largest flies are appropriate. In summer the befitting flies are small. When there is a chill in the air and in the water flies with silver bodies are attractive. When the stream is low a sombre lure is the most likely to succeed. When it is tinted by flood water a gaudy one should be in

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ply. These rules, set down mainly in relation to salmon, hold good as regards the seatrout. Seatrout flies are smaller than salmon flies; but they are similar to these in being one of man's random inventions. As a rule seatrout and salmon are alike uninterested either in the insects native to the fresh waters or in lures in imitation of those insects. Indeed, when fishing on some large river, one frequently finds the seatrout attracted by salmon flies almost as readily as they are attracted by the smaller flies designed for themselves. This suggests that in the salt water or in the estuaries salmon and seatrout have certain articles of food in common, creatures that the flies resemble.

The Lammas flood is the herald of an exhilarating time. It washes the dust from the world, freshens the winds, and restores body and spirit to the streams. What fairer sight than a full-flowing clean river alive with salmonkind fresh from the sea? The spectacle and the

opportunity are not depreciated by knowledge that in trying to catch a few of the fish we are without that adaptation of means to end which renders more or less scientific our relations with the brown trout. The very uncertainties of the endeavour lend to it a peculiar zest. The probabilities are against you ; but there is always a chance that you may stumble into a success beyond that of the wildest hope. If you have the right fly at work on the right pool, you may take in a day a weight of fish equal to that of all the brown trout caught in many weeks.

To some readers it will seem strange that I have been writing about the migratory salmonkind as if the season for those fish were only approaching. Are they not, it will be asked, being caught already? Yes : in certain streams they are ; and on that account there is occasion to consider an interesting state of affairs.

Whilst we have been thinking of the

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great rivers flowing to the east coast, and of the time when these have migratory fish, it is true that sport with seatrout and salmon has already been found on streams flowing to the west. Why do the fish run plentifully into the west-coast streams at a time when there is little or no run in the others? There are two causes. One of them is due to Nature; the other is the work of man. Look at the configuration of Scotland. Nearly all the rivers flowing into the North Sea, on the east, are very long, and all those which fall into the Atlantic, on the west, are very short. That is because the range of hills separating the great watersheds is not at any part much more than twenty miles from the west coast. Whilst both sets of watercourses have approximately the same origin, they have different temperatures. Strange as it may seem, in the early half of the year it is the western streams that have the lower temperature. Far into the spring these short waters, fed by melted snow,

are very cold, so cold that the migratory fish, instead of running into them, stay in the sea, directly warmed by the Gulf Stream, until the rivers are made comfortably habitable by rain in May or June. Melted snow is the origin of the other rivers also ; but long before their courses are run they have been warmed in the plains, and the North Sea, not being so much affected by the Gulf Stream, is far into spring colder than the rivers which it receives. Thus, while the migratory fish of the west are lingering in the salt water for the sake of warmth, those of the east are running into the rivers to escape the cold.

In reality, then, it is the western streams that are late, and it is the eastern streams that are early. The seatrout and salmon that have recently been caught in the Awe and the Orchy and the Shiel are, as it were, fish analogous to those which were caught in the Spey and the Dee and the Tay between February and the beginning of June. That is the

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arrangement of Nature, and not open to criticism.

Man, however, has supplemented the arrangement. On the western watershed he is less solicitously mercantile than he is on the east coast and for a good way inland; in which large region he has prosecuted commercial fishings with an assiduity that has amounted to persecution. Of the millions of seatrout and salmon that every year enter the estuaries on the east only a few thousands ever get beyond the top of the tide. The others are taken by the nets. The nets are off the waters only for two or three weeks at the beginning of the season and for two or three weeks at the end. That is why from the beginning of June until the August flood there are hardly any seatrout or salmon taken by the rod from rivers flowing to the east. The fish of the early migration that escaped both nets and rods have been so long in the fresh water that they do not rise at fly. There are no fresh-run fish in the rivers.

Indeed, there are but few fish in the sea that would run even if the nets were off. "The spring run" and "the autumn run" are phrases that conceal a misapprehension of the facts of Nature. Undoubtedly there are these runs; but the truth, unobserved for generations and so forgotten, is that if Nature had her way there would be other runs as well. The short streams of the west, though without fish for a few months at the beginning of the year, are still almost in a state of nature; but the great rivers flowing to the east are not in this state, and that is why they are without runs for three or four months in the middle of the year. It is an error to suppose that it is not natural for sea-trout and salmon to run into these rivers in May, in June, in July. Naturally there is a run for every month of the year. There always was such a run before the fisheries became commercial. What has happened is that the tribes of fish which by nature seek fresh water

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in the months named have been gradually brought near to extinction by the nets. Practically the only tribes left to maintain the species are those which run in the few weeks at the beginning of the season and the few weeks at the end when the nets are off.

“Practically,” I have said; and the word leaves room for hope. As may be seen at the fish-shops and elsewhere, there are still seatrout and salmon to be had in May or in June or in July. There is still in the estuary of every river the remnant of a May stock, that of a June stock, and that of a July stock; and if it were made free of the river the remnant in each case would ere long be a tribe in full strength once more. Within recent years there has been, among all classes concerned, a growing willingness to approve any measures which, even if they should involve a temporary loss to commerce, would lead to restoration of the salmonkind. Indeed, in not a few rivers the netting

has already been lessened with markedly good results. All will be well when owners, lessees, and the public discover the mistake of supposing that the fish run only at the beginning of the year and towards the end, and realise that, even as there are monthly roses, there are by nature monthly runs of seatrout and salmon also. Curtailment of netting during May and June and July will then be an admitted necessity.

CHAPTER IX

SEPTEMBER

The Tay in Flood—How Rain Differs from Melted Snow—Soot Film on a Loch—Where to Cast?—Bays of Two Kinds—An Ideal Bay—Why It is Good—Floods Which are too Fierce—Waste of Water—How that can be Prevented.

IF only the harvest had been completed when the rains began, the valley of the Tay would have been a place of unqualified delight this month. The river has been constantly in flood. What that means can hardly be realised by those who are familiar with small streams only. A rise in these waters is measured by inches ; but a rise in the Tay is a matter of feet, or even of yards. When there is a flood of between three and four yards miles upon miles of the valley become a lake ; that is what happens once or twice

very early in the year, when rain from the south-west is accompanied by a quick melting of snow on the mountains.

A two-yards rise, which may be called a moderate flood, is what comes in less intemperate autumn. It is quite without disadvantage from the angler's point of view. A flood which comes mainly or largely from out of the snowdrifts is very cold, so cold that fish of all kinds abstain from food ; but the flood early in autumn is from rain only, rain just cold enough to revive their instincts and whet their appetites. You are not, as in springtime you sometimes are, driven far from the banks. Though there is a little overflowing on a meadow here or there, the river is for the most part within its own recognised channel. It is muddy from road water for a few hours at the beginning of the rain ; but after that it is wonderfully clear, even if it be still rising. Here, again, the flood in autumn differs markedly from that of spring. Whilst discoloration is essential and lasting early

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in the year, it is incidental and fleeting when the year wanes. What is the explanation?

Anglers at large say that melted snow has a colour other than that of ordinary water, meaning that in the processes of being frozen and of being dissolved moisture acquires a dirty-grey tinge and ceases to be limpid. The bare facts of the case are as they state; but I think that the true explanation has been missed. We hear of this or that being "pure as snow"; but is snow always pure? One spring day, when looking for foxes on a mountain in the watershed of the Tay, I came upon cause for this sceptical question. It was the remnant of a snow-wreath so much tarnished that only when we were almost upon it, and the dogs were rolling about in it to be cooled after their long climb, had we recognised it as once having been snow. Soft for about two inches on the surface, and rotten ice below, it was extraordinarily dirty, almost, in appearance at least, as much

so as the slush of London streets when snow and salt have been churned by the traffic. How was that? Whence had the impurities come? I surmised then, and think now, that they had come with the clouds from Glasgow. The furnaces of that great city send into the air enormous quantities of peculiarly dense smoke, which is distributed to astonishing distances. This I know from frequently-repeated observations on a loch on the other side of the hills which are the southern boundary of Loch Tay. It is covered by a film of soot when rain comes from the south-west, where Glasgow is. The film is so considerable that when the water is dead-calm trout breaking the surface, not with their heads only but with their backs and tails also, leave in it the marks of their shapes, and when wind comes, making the water break in waves upon the shore, the beach is blackened. Now, if rain brings down some of the impurities with which the clouds are charged, is it not manifest that snowflakes, much larger

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than raindrops, must bring down greater quantities? Any one who doubts the theory can be convinced by a simple experiment. Let him taste either rain or snow that has come after a time of drought. It has a rank flavour of soot.

The fish do not seem to mind the contamination in the autumn floods. Perhaps it is much slighter than the contamination in the floods which come out of the accumulated snows in spring. The rain-water must be well filtered in its comparatively gentle progress through heather and moss and shingle down the hills. At any rate, the river, as has been said, is limpid even when the flood is at its height, and the fish are in a coming-on disposition.

Where to cast? That is the question. Brown trout, in flood, seek the line of least resistance, and are away from their usual haunts. They could, if they liked, front the torrent at its fiercest; but they do not. Thus many a pool or streamy

stretch which is first-class in summer is useless when the floods are out.

The fish have run into bays, sheltered places which were waterless before the river rose. It is not in every bay, however, that you may expect sport. Some of the bays are the deep and foam-flecked whirlpools which Mr. Ruskin describes in language much too grand to be quoted in these unæsthetic pages. In such bays trout are absentees. Trout in a whirlpool would have water going through their gills the wrong way and would be drowned. This is a fact which seems to be generally unknown to instructors in the art of angling. These err in telling us to "fish the eddies." Usually there are trout at the edges of the eddies ; but there is never a trout in an eddy itself. The whirlpools of the Tay are so large that, as a rule, you cannot reach the outer edge, where there may be trout, and usually the swirl reaches to the bank you stand on, near which, therefore, there is none. Bays of

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another kind are almost equally hopeless. These are they in which the water, though not whirling, looks as if it were boiling violently ; heaving up in sections and sinking down again ; on and on so, in unceasing fretfulness. Now or then a trout is taken from such a bay ; but it is not a comfortable place. Just watch the leaves and twigs in it, noting how they are tossed up and down, this way and that ; and you will understand why, as a rule, trout shun such a caldron.

Where, then, are we to fish ? Well, that will be best explained through an example. Just beside the first hole on the golf-course at Aberfeldy there is an ideal bay. At that place, about 200 yards below General Wade's famous bridge, the channel of the river is very wide, so wide that at ordinary times the water fills only the northern half, leaving the other dry ; the halves are separated by a long bank of gravel. When the river has risen about three feet the bank is submerged and the half of the channel which was

dry is filled. By the time the water is another yard up, all the trout of the pool opposite and of about quarter-of-a-mile of the rapids below seem to have gathered in the bay by the first hole. You see them rising, rising, rising, some of them not more than two yards from your feet; and many of them have slowly-waving tails that are thrillingly large.

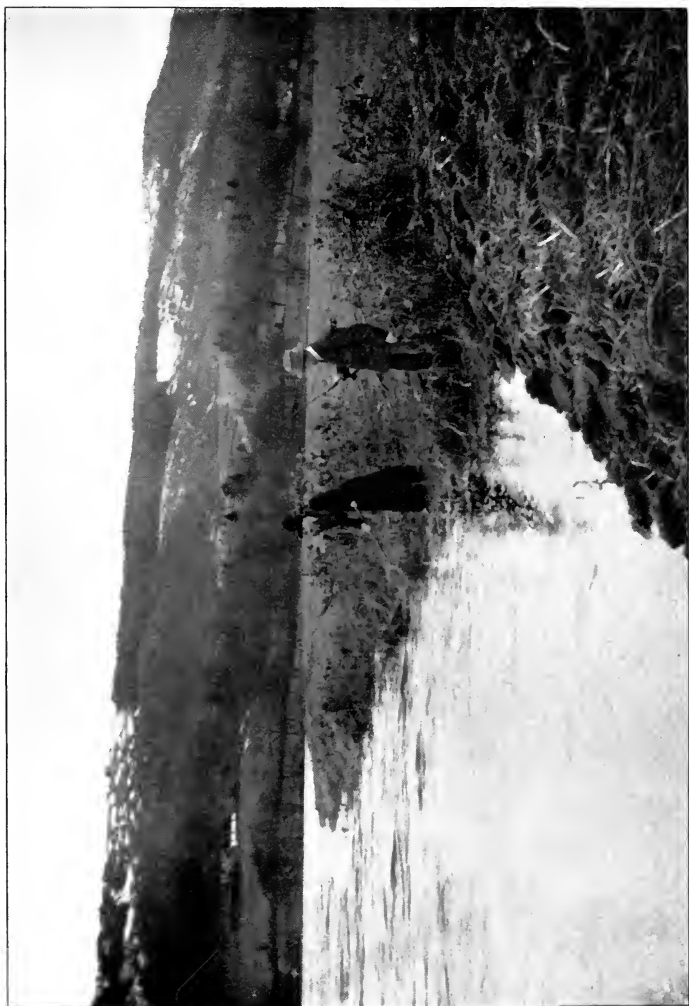
During this month's floods heavy baskets have been borne away from that place, on which a few weeks ago one stood striving to retrieve a pulled shot from the tee!

I am not sure that it is possible to tell exactly why this bay is a favourite with the trout; but one can at least note its obvious characteristics. The water does not whirl, and it does not surge. It does not at any stage flow backwards; in the two or three yards where it is very slow it is flowing in the same direction as that in which the main gush goes. Above all, it is part of what was the original channel of the river. Trout, I think, instinctively

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visit, whenever they can, the hovers of their ancestors.

The autumn floods are just as they should be. They cannot be deemed too high. They enable the salmon and the seatrout to run, and so scour and cleanse the bottoms of the river and all the tributaries that the spawn-beds shall be wholesome. The floods of spring will suggest thoughts much less comfortable. They will be in exaggeration of the design of Nature. Nowadays the hills and the mountains are seamed with artificial drains almost from the summits. These became necessary in order that there might be large flocks of healthy sheep. One result is that when rain and melting snow combine to make a flood there comes vast injury to other than pastoral interests. Millions of the eggs of salmon and millions of the eggs of trout are swept out of the spawn-beds and destroyed. Besides, the water of the floods is, to a very large extent, sheer waste. A three-foot rise is quite enough to allow the



W. L. Wood, Junior.

THE FIRST HOLE POOL.

migratory salmonkind to run. All the water beyond that is a ruinous extravagance. Its very effectively assisted passage to the sea is the reason why, as Mr. C. G. Barrington has noted in *The Times*, the rivers are so low in summer that neither seatrout nor salmon could run then. If the mountain regions had not been drained, the rains and the snows would be economised and the rivers would have natural and ample flows all through the year.

The hills and the mountains are drained, however, and there's an end of that. We would not undo the measure of progress if we could.

Still, there is no reason why we should not neutralise it. That is possible and almost easy. The means has been frequently described. It is the construction of reservoirs at or near the source of rivers. In a great many cases Nature herself seems to have anticipated the plan. She has placed a lake at or near the source of many a river. Not a few

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rivers, indeed, are doubly equipped in that respect. Of these the Tay is an example. It has both Loch Tay and Loch Lyon to draw upon. If either of these lakes, at the narrow outflow, were fitted with a sluiced dam a few feet high, the river would not need, even in the severest summer drought, to be lower than it used to be at such a time before the drainage system was begun. The stored water could be let into the river as required.

When the notion of storage was first mooted there were naturalists ready to contend that stored water was "dead water," and that fish would not run through it. They have been corrected by the complete success of experiments. Stored water is not by any means "dead water"; for reasons indicated at the beginning of this article, it is likely to be considerably less impure than water which is unnaturally rushed off the hills in a rainstorm or in a thaw.

Indeed, however, the storage system is

not in question. Its merits have been proved. All that we need now to do is to realise that it is easily and cheaply applied. The dams cost very little; the wages of managing them are trifling; and the loss of the strip of land which is submerged in the raising of the level of any lake is quickly balanced by the increased prosperity of the fisheries for many miles below. Even a river which is without a lake at or near its source can as a rule have the system of redress applied. Somewhere near its source there is sure to be an area of low-lying waste land in which a lake could be easily set. In this matter, happily, the needs of domestic civilisation, the interests of sport, and the conditions which preserve or restore the amenities of nature are all in harmony. If we would have our rivers in a state of natural purity, we must have them in natural flow. From whatever point of view the problem is regarded, that is the cardinal consideration.

CHAPTER X

OCTOBER

Early Closing on the Tay—An Unexpected Invitation
—Bismarck—The Earn in Flood—Next Day—
“Whaur Peter Bides”—Peter’s Bad Repute—
Apologetic Reflections—John’s Account of Peter—
A Seatrout and a Snub—In the Afternoon—The
Dread Pool—At Last!—The Spectre and the Salmon
—Rash Curiosity and What Came of it.

IN Scotland the statutory close-time as regards trout begins on October 16; but in our district it is feudally ordained that there shall be no fishing for trout after the end of September. That is wise. The Tay trout spawn late, and are in good condition throughout October; but they are not so plentiful as they should be. Twenty years ago, Mr. Wood tells me, any fairly skilful angler could easily have 15 lb., or even more, on a favourable

morning at any time of the season ; but now a basket of similar weight is to be expected only on an exceptionally good day in spring, or during the August or September floods. The trout have not become warier than they were of old. The change, my friend declares, is attributable to their having become fewer. Pike have been multiplying. They are plentiful in all the many backwaters and in the deep still bays. They destroy thousands of trout. They have practically absolute sanctuary. Now and then one of them is taken on a lure that is being plied for salmon ; but otherwise they are left to prey and to propagate in peace. If the pike were systematically netted out the stocks of game fish would rapidly revive. Meanwhile it is well that the trout should have a yearly fortnight more of freedom than the Law commands. During the first half of October the salmon of the Tay are still fair game ; but in our part of the river that is what may be called a derisory privilege. You might

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almost as well set out to catch capercailzie by putting salt on their tails as hope to catch a salmon above Grantully this month. The fish that pass Grantully do not pause very often or very long until they are in Loch Tay, or in the tributaries thereof, or in the Lyon; and fish that are running are not to be successfully tempted by any lure. Thus it seemed that the close of September was to be the end of the season.

Just before the middle of October, however, there came an interesting letter with the morning tea-tray. It was an invitation to fish on the Earn. It came from a man whom I did not know. He explained that he sent it at the suggestion of a London friend-in-common. He had, he said, a very good stretch of the river; but, though the fish were many, he was not succeeding very much. Would I come to show him how to do better?

Of course I would! I am far from being as crafty a hand at salmon-fishing as I hope to become; but, except amid

serious circumstances, there is never any use in saying that you cannot do something which you are asked to do. My friend's friend on the Earn would probably be at least as fortunate, during my visit, as myself; but I would go cheerfully and with brave countenance.

As things turned out, I needed considerable courage. The train was late; and the dog-cart which was to take me from the little station, on the line from Perth to Balquhiddy, was later. After a four-miles drive amid heavy rain, I found my host, on the door-step of a fine old mansion, obviously a little put out at the delay. We were to fish that afternoon, and it was now nearly two o'clock.

I had never seen Prince Bismarck; but I had seen many portraits of him, and my host, save for his bushy auburn hair, seemed to be the Prussian come to life again. The resemblance was not merely physical. My new friend's habit of mind was stern. This I realised during the conversation at our hasty luncheon.

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When I asked him, for example, what he thought of the proposal to end the House of Lords, "I don't think of it at all," he said. "The House of Lords cannot be ended except by civil war—fighting in the streets." Other topics upon which I ventured fared no better. He dismissed each of them with a swift judgment which left no fresh opening. If you think that I must have been leading in the conversation, you are quite right. It is true that I was taking the lead; but what could I do? Bismarck was not taking it himself. When we were on the way to the water, to reach which we had to trudge downhill through three or four pathless and muddy fields, he mentioned that all his life he had been subject to hot haste of temper, and that he was only now, on retirement from the Stock Exchange early in middle life, getting the better of the habit. You are not to think that I was ill at ease with him. On the contrary, I was delighted. He struck me as being a

still strong man in a bleatant land ; a refreshing person in a time of Socialists, Dryflers, Cobdenites, and other total abstainers from high spirits and common sense.

The river was in flood. It seemed ridiculous to think of it as being a tributary of the Tay. That is how it is regarded geographically ; but it would be more precisely thought of if deemed a substantive river having an estuary in common with the Tay. That afternoon, on which I saw it at close quarters for the first time, it was as big as the Tay itself. It was more discoloured than the famous river ever is after the first gush of a sudden flood has passed away. Not there and then, at any rate, I perceived, should I be able to show Bismarck how to catch a salmon. Even in a muddy flood trout sometimes hover so near the surface that they can see flies floating down ; but salmon habitually lie at the bottom. An Eagle, the largest and most gaudy of our lures, would be invisible to them on the

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brown Earn heaving from bank to brae.

So I thought, and I was not wrong. Neither of us had seen any sign of a salmon as we went homewards through the fields.

Next morning the scene had quite a different complexion. There had been frost in the night. Rime lay daintily on the grass, and the river sparkled in sunshine. The flood had fallen two or three feet, and the water was beautifully clear. Failure on such a day would be inexcusable.

I had a rise soon after beginning. O the joy of it! So certain did it seem that the fish were "on the move," I had no chagrin at having struck too late. What was a missed rise on the morning of a day when one would have a dozen or a score of rises? I should assuredly have three fish, if not four, by the time I was to meet Bismarck, where a mill-stream ran into the Earn fully a mile down, at luncheon. My only fear was that he

himself might have five. An exaggerated reputation is not an unqualified advantage.

“Boast not of the day in the morning,” as the Spaniards say. Ten o’clock passed, and eleven, and twelve ; yet the fish were still all in the river. Not another rise had I had. My gillie had begun to look disappointed, and even censorious. He hadna’ thocht it possible to be sae long and sae hard at it on sic a day wi’oot a fush.

“We may get one here, John,” I answered as, having passed a clump of trees, we came upon a pool in which two fish had just risen at the same moment.

John did not answer, and on turning to see why he was silent I found him looking uneasily across the river. His features, hitherto always ready to break into a smile, were set in something like alarm. He tried to let them relax when he knew I was looking at him. Not altogether succeeding, he reluctantly entered upon an explanation.

“That’s whaur Peter bides,” he said,

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nodding at a house across the water, and as if speaking to himself rather than to me. It was a large, straggling house of one storey, evidently very old. It was enclosed by a square of ancient oaks. These details I took in while wondering what could be the importance of Peter in John's eyes. I asked who Peter was.

"He's greenkeeper to the Golf Club up by," John answered slowly. After a pause he began again, this time with resolution.

"As ye're sure to be wantin' to stay a guid while at this pool, Sir, and maybe to come back to't—for it does ha'e mony fush, I maun allow—I'll jist be plain wi' ye, Sir. Peter's a witch—a man witch—what's ca'd a warlock."

"O John!" I exclaimed.

"Ye needna' laugh, Sir. It's the truth I'm tellin'. And I'm feared that, if he is at hame, he may put the buidseachd on ye—and on me too."

"The buidseachd, John! What's that?"

“The evil ee,” said John, in low tones.

I was too much astonished to speak.

A greenkeeper with the evil eye!

It was true that after a three-years residence in the Highlands it had become difficult to remain absolutely certain that the invisible veil between this world and its life and some other world and its activities was never rent. Considerations that had sapped incredulity crowded into mind. There was, for example, what Winsome and I had been told one day when, taking a walk towards Ballinluig, we had been hospitably hailed into a farmhouse near Dalguise. It was the 13th of January, which is still New Year's Day in parts of the Highlands, and the household were making merry with cake and wine. The farmer's daughter was vexed that she could not give us any butter to carry away. She had been trying to make butter that morning; but a certain neighbour had come in, and had cast the evil eye upon the churn. The butter would not make. This had been

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told to us in perfect candour. Naming the possessor of the evil eye, a youngish woman known to us, the buxom damsel had stated the case in the simple manner in which she would have recounted a sale of sheep or the birth of a calf. Other recollections were such as I cannot specifically relate. Persons still living, neighbours of our own, would be saddened if I did so relate them. They were about a man and a woman who met their deaths tragically, one by accident and the other by her own will, and could not be found until the distraught relations called for the help of an old spinster living in Glenlyon, ten miles off, who "has the second sight." The sorceress declared that the bodies were lying in certain places, and there the bodies were found. The stories to which I allude are not idle legends. No one in our neighbourhood, which is as sane as any other, calls them in question. They are known to the minutest detail, and believed absolutely. Two or three

other chronicles of a similarly strange kind, gathered during the few years which have been mentioned, it would be possible to set down ; but, though they came hastily to memory as I gazed at the quaint house on the Earn, I need not narrate them. I will only say that it is hardly possible for any one, howsoever well endowed with the critical hard-headedness that comes from moving about in the most worldly society, in London or elsewhere, to dwell in the Highlands without soon beginning to be doubtful as to whether all "superstitions" are so superstitious as at first they seem.

"But the Greenkeeper to a Golf Club possessed of the Evil Eye ! O John, that is too steep !" I said this to myself after pondering for a few moments ; and then I said as much to the gillie.

"Weel, Sir," said John, doggedly, "though what I ha'e tell't ye may soond rideecilous, it's what a' the folks hereaboot believe. Peter's no' canny."

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“Has he cast the evil eye upon many of them?”

“On nane ava’ that we can be quite sure aboot,” John answered, in a tone less burdened by apprehension. “But that’s nae doobt because he hasna’ had need to.”

This was puzzling; but John explained.

“Peter is compairatively a stranger here. He’s been i’ this pairish only three years come Martinmas. But the gowfers werena’ long in findin’ oot that they had made a waefu’ bad bargain when they appinted him to keep the green. For ae reason or anither, there’s no’ a man among them that’s no’ carefu’ no’ to offend Peter. In fac’, he’s the terror o’ the countryside.”

“Where did he come from?”

“Oot o’ Logierait, far ower the hills there,” said John, waving a hand towards the north. “The Club didna’ ken onything about him when they brocht him here—except what they were tell’t in his testimonials. What was pit into his



C. Jackson.

SPRING FLOOD IN THE TAY VALLEY ; SUNSET (page 224).

testimonials seemed to be a' richt. In fac', ye never saw the like. A'boddy o' staunin' in Logierait and for mony a mile roond aboot—lairds an' members o' the Hoose o' Lords, forby meenisters o' a' denominations—ga'e Peter the grandest character. But the Club sees through a' that noo. Peter's auld freen's wanted to get quit o'm."

"Is that known to be the case, or is it guess-work?"

"Vera little guess-work aboot it, Sir. Nae sooner had Peter been safely appinted than members o' the Club began to get letters frae freen's in Logierait warnin' them aboot Peter—letters frae some o' the few in the pairish wha hadna' gi'en him testimonials. They were to the effec' that he was in league wi' the De'il, and that the De'il had even been seen in his company—playin' awfu' pranks. Some o' the folks here say the same thing—though they're gey quiet aboot it, keepin' a calm sooch as far as possible."

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John paused, and then said, in a lighter voice, "But there's ae guid thing. It seems that Peter never bides very long in ae place—seldom mair than four or five years. So, it may be, we ha'e only twa years o'm noo."

"Couldn't he be sent off before then? Why doesn't the Club give him the sack?" I was speaking in the hope of urging John on to further chatter.

"Send Peter awa', Sir! Mercy on us, wha would daur to dae that? It was thocht o' at first, when it was seen that Peter negleckit his wark; but when things cam' to the pint, at an extraordinar' general meetin' o' the gowfers, naebody could be got to propose the motion. They a' kent that onybody wha did propose't would be a target for Peter's evil ee. So, I'm told, they a' sat as quiet and solemn as if they were i' the kirk. Mair dumb, in fact; for no' even the Captain, wha was in the chair, found his tongue, excep' to say, after they had a' sat in

dead silence for ten minutes or a quarter, 'I think, gentlemen, we may now adjourn.' Ye see, Sir, the vera nicht afore the meetin' a fearfu' sicht had been seen aboot Peter's hoose, an' that, comin' on the heels o' the warnin's frae the north, was alarmin'."

"What was the fearful sight, John?"

"I'd rayther no' say, Sir, if you'll excuse me. It doesna' do to talk aboot sic things. But I think I can safely tell ye this, as Peter himself brags aboot it when he's in guid humour. Peter's no' really the servant o' the Club. Ye see whaur he bides—near twa mile frae the coorse. That's because he says the garrets abune the Club rooms dinna' suit his health. He's vera often doon at the coorse, especially if there's a guid match gaun' on; but as for keepin' the greens—he hardly ever does a haun's turn. Besides a' this, at every quarterly meetin' there's a letter frae him demandin' a rise o' wages; an' he aye gets it, for the reason I ha'e made ye acquaint wi'—naebody daurs say

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no to Peter. He's the maister o's a' in thae pairts."

During most of this talk we had been moving slowly down the pool, casting. Just as John had resumed, to tell about Peter's riches, which were reputed to be considerable, a fish rose at the fly. He strained heavily as he went down, and I had no thought that he could be other than one of the salmon which had been leaping; but he immediately came up again with a dash that carried him into the air, and we saw him to be a seatrout.

"We'll ha'e to go noo, Sir," said John, as he lifted the fish out on the gaff. "It's nearly lunch time. But we're only a short step frae the mill-stream."

At the tryst we found Bismarck seated on the bank, waiting.

"Any luck?" I asked.

"None," said he.

I beckoned to John. He brought my creel, and showed the seatrout, which was nearly a four-pounder.

"Yes: I see," said Bismarck, quickly

turning to his packet of sandwiches ;
“but we’re fishing for salmon.”

It was nearly three o’clock when John and I were back to the place where we had begun in the morning. Luncheon, rest, and the lapse of time have a wonderful effect on the angler’s spirit. If he has had good sport in the morning, he expects to have better in the afternoon ; if he has had none, he is confident that at least a little is to come. He sets to work, in either case, with reason in his mood. The fish have been “on the take”? Why, then, it is probable that they are on still. They have been off? Well, as they usually rise for a while at some stage of the day, it may be that we are just in the nick of time.

John and I were thoroughly optimistic at the fresh start and for half-an-hour after. Then our conversation began to languish. John remained civil and attentive ; but I have no doubt he was con-

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vinced that there was something wrong in my way of working the fly. As a matter of fact, he had been suggesting that a little more line would be advisable. "In this clear water they're apt to see ye unless the flee is weel awa'." When he said that, I always let out a little more ; but after four or five casts I was moved to reel in, surreptitiously. It was from no want of will that the fly and myself fell short of John's requirements. It was simply from want of strength. On an eighteen-feet greenheart rod three or four extra yards of line add considerably to the horse-power required in casting, and already, after a long morning of practically fruitless effort, my left ribs and both arms were aching. This I should not have noticed had we been having any success ; but failure brings troubles of all kinds into view. I was finding John's remarks, now become infrequent, tiresome. John, hitherto a youth of sprightly humour, was become as much a bore to me as I was a duffer to him. The very

weather was obtrusive. As often happens early in autumn, the frost of the morning had "come back," and the heavens were veiled in cloud. If only we had been having a fish now and then, or even a run, the weather would have seemed all right; as things were, it was dismal. Salmon here and there were leaping; but not one of them would look at a fly. Besides, I had an exceptional cause of being out-of-sorts. Residing in the wilds, I have an instinctive conscience as regards north, south, east, and west. On the drive from the railway station to the house, over a road which had many turns, I must, for a moment, have lost the sense of directions, which I had not recovered; at any rate, ever since I had set foot on its bank this river Earn, which I knew to flow from west to east, had seemed to be flowing from east to west. Readers native to the land south of the Border, who never know where they are in relation to the points of the compass, and laugh at any one who raises the question, will perhaps

oblige me by recalling their feelings when under the influence of one of those recurring dreams in which you think, for example, that you have just entered a ball-room and are trying so to arrange your overcoat that the night-dress shall be concealed. The peculiar irritation which was caused by the Earn persistently flowing the wrong way will then be understood.

When we came to the pool opposite Peter's house John and I, it may be said, were not on speaking terms. At any rate, we were not speaking. That I felt to be fortunate. Had we been in the cheerful relationship of the beginning, morning or afternoon, John might have counselled a hasty passage beyond the range of the uncanny influence; but, as he was despising me so much that he was no longer even suggesting a change of fly, he could not very well break silence to ask a favour.

He sighed when, having reached the end of the pool, I turned towards the

head of it once more ; but that did not deter me. He could hardly be more uneasy about Peter than I was about my plain-spoken host.

The fact is, While not deserving the repute in which I was apparently held by the friend-in-common of Bismarck and myself, I was not such a duffer as John thought. It had not been for nothing that I had become acquainted with a good many miles of the Tay under the guidance of James Stewart. I do now or then know a good pool when I see it. The whole of the stretch over which we had gone looked promising ; but this pool was the best part. All the rest of the water was such as salmon often show themselves on, frequently leaping ; but it was such water as they ran through without much stoppage. The pool was the one place in which fish would be lying in wait.

Night falls early after the middle of October. It was nearly dark when we were at the head of the pool again. I

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was not sorry. Two or three of the rising salmon were only a few yards from our bank. I could easily reach them with a comparatively short line, and in the dusk I should not be seen. . . . At last!

On parting from Mr. Malloch, to whom, according to custom when passing through Perth, I had paid my respects the morning before, I had received wishes for good luck and a forty-pounder. It seemed as if the wishes were to be not vain.

You cannot always tell, even approximately, the weight of a fish just hooked; but there was something unprecedentedly emphatic about this one. Against the easy violence of his dive, the great, stiff, lumbering rod was as a reed shaken by the wind.

If a salmon could make the weapon bustle about so, why should not I? I felt ashamed of my aches and pains, and they instantly ceased to be. Why had I been cross and taciturn? John was the

best gillie in the Highlands! He was already delivering heartfelt felicitations.

"Take a drink, John."

"Yes, Sir: wi' richt guid wull. . . . This is to be a stiff job, Sir, and a long aye."

"You didn't see him, John?"

"No, Sir; but I ken the place. They're aye vera big fish that lie here. In fact, this pool and the bit just below the mill-stream, whaur the Maister has been fishin' a' day, are the only casts in the water that ye can really depend on."

In the uplifting excitement of the moment, John was candid.

"But what about Peter, John?"

"O, we maun e'en try no' to think aboot Peter. It was here that the forty-twa-pounder was ta'en last season—at this time o' the month, too. Losh, Sir!" he added as the reel whizzed, "should we no' be movin' doon?"

I should have been glad to go downstream; but it would not have been easy to do so for more than about thirty yards, and therefore, as the pull of the fish had

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not become really dangerous, it would have been unwise to move at all. At the short distance indicated, the path by the river ceased and the very high bank slipped steeply into the stream. Just where the path ended a peril in the water began. This was a long series of tree stumps, situate at intervals so regular as to indicate that the river had gradually, in the course of ages, eaten its way under the roots of an ancient avenue. Notwithstanding what is told in Chapter IV., a hooked salmon does not make a point of running under a snag whenever there is a chance ; my own experience goes to show that the fish nearly always rejects the chance. I would have run that risk, then, had it been the only risk ; but there was the precipitous bank. Even in daylight, instead of venturing to seek on it foothold close to the river, I had passed up round the shoulder and walked along on the level top ; and I had seen its unstable face, a front of sand, to be honeycombed with rabbit-holes. It was not a place over

which one would willingly run after a salmon in the dark.

On consideration John admitted this. Also he perceived that, as we could not go down indefinitely, it was better not to go down at all until absolutely obliged to. We would keep the thirty yards as a reserve against the extreme measures which the salmon would probably adopt.

"But what if he runs up?" asked John in an afterthought; adding, "That would be even waur than his fleein' doon."

The clump of trees at our shoulder completely blocking the way upstream, that was true; it had not until then occurred to me. The salmon had not shown any disposition towards running up. Now he was not even alarming in his tendency the other way. His head was upstream again, and I had recovered most of the line that had been rushed off; he had been moving in half-circular directions from one side of the river to the other, and, sedate but strong, was still upon that course.

Swish ! sh-sh-sh-z.

That is an ugly sign for a beautiful thing, the sound of the spray which falls upon the water when a salmon leaps and for a moment after.

"Was that our fish loupin'?" John asked anxiously.

"I couldn't see; but I think so. At any rate, he's turned and flying."

Soon we were at the end of our thirty yards, and the contents of the reel were our sole resource. . . . All the hundred yards of plaited silk were out . . . half the backing of brown twine was gone . . . ten yards or so more and rupture was inevitable . . . but the fish had turned ! He was keeping on the offside, too, far away from the line of snags.

Slowly he came upstream; slowly, slowly, the tense line softly humming; the while I reeled in inch by inch and warily stepped backwards towards the copse.

"When does the moon rise, John?"

Though John was close behind me

and must have heard, there was no answer.

“It would be a help, John.”

Still John was silent.

When I looked inquiringly over my left shoulder, it became evident that there was something wrong.

John, stalwart John, was motionless; his face had become so pallid that it reflected what faint light there was; the eyes, fixed and staring, expressed some indefinite fear.

A school chum had used to be just like that before falling and writhing and foaming at the mouth. He had been epileptic. Was it possible. . . .

“It’s a’ richt, Sir,” John whispered, as if dreading to be overheard. “Excuse me. But jist look ower your ither shoulder.”

On looking as directed I saw that John was in no need to be apologetic.

A Spectre had entered upon the mirky scene. It was standing, a little way up, on the other side of the river. I would

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say that It was watching us were it not that It seemed to be without a head. Otherwise the figure was that of a man. The outlines were perfectly clear. The dress was what is called "a lounge suit," and the hands were in the pockets of the coat. Withal, It had an aspect of unreality. It did not seem substantial. It was but a figure of light at the best ; not glaring light ; dim, indeed, or at least strangely soft ; white, with a delicate stain of blue ; and, gazing intently, I saw, or fancied, that it flickered.

"It cam' oot o' Peter's hoose," John muttered.

"Who or what can It be ?"

"I ha'e my ain idees ; but I'd rayther no' say. Only, ye may mind what I tell't ye aboot wha plays pranks wi' Peter. I'm no' for namin' him the noo."

You may think that my observations and this dialogue were singularly deliberate. So they were. I found myself astonished at them. They occupied less than a minute, however ;

and stupefaction, rather than active alarm, would seem to be the first effect of a Vision. Perhaps the salmon had a steadying influence. Thirty or forty yards off, he was ponderously sauntering across-stream and across. I daresay he helped me not to lose the sense of being still on a pathway of reality. At any rate, I did not feel so ghastly as John was when I had looked at him.

Rumination on these self-satisfied lines came to an abrupt end.

Just as he had touched on the other shore and was due to turn on his tracks, the salmon leaped. The Spectre heard him, and came strolling down the bank. It did not glide, as glides the ghost of the novel or of the stage; It walked just as a man would walk. It stopped where the fish had leapt and plunged. Then, instead of completing his cruise to the hither shore, the salmon rushed towards the Spectre. He paused, not far from the bank, opposite the dread being. That

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was not all. When the Spectre, turned upstream again, resumed Its stroll, the fish set off in the same direction. At first I took this, if indeed I thought of it at all, to be accidental; but evidently it was not so. When the Spectre stopped, near the head of the pool, the salmon stopped. When It began to come down again, so did the salmon; tail-first, I felt, but as it were keeping step with the apparition backwards. An involuntary utterance of astonishment was not unnatural.

“Beg pardon, Sir?” said John.

“He’s seen the ghost,” I answered, “and is following It about.”

John made no immediate remark; but soon he said, “Wha ever ken’t the like o’ that? If I had the freedom o’ the fush, it’s no gaun’ near the ghost I’d be—if ghost he is, Sir.”

“You don’t want to run, John?”

“No’ noo, Sir. At first, if I could ha’ done onything at a,’ I micht ha’ been inclined to run; but I’m gettin’ used to’t.

Forby, he needs long legs that wud run frae—ye ken wha, Sir.”

“Pooh, John! I see neither tail nor horns, and I don’t think there are hoofs.”

John said something which from his tone I knew to be reproachfully argumentative; but I did not really hear him. Suddenly I had a new cause for anxiety. Had It a definite beat? How far down was It going? Would It stop and turn where It had stopped and turned before? If It should lead the fish down the river farther than the line would reach from the end of my own beat, I should have but little chance of coming out of this tussle in triumph.

Again involuntary words must have escaped.

“Beg pardon, Sir?”

“Nothing, John. Only, I was thinking of asking It to stop. If It goes far down and the fish goes too, we’re done, I’m afraid. Will you shout, John?”

“No’ me, Sir,—unless ye gi’e positive orders. I shouldna’ like to be askin’

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an obleegment frae the—ye ken wha, Sir, as I said before.”

By this time the Spectre was Itself beginning to settle my concern. It had stopped, and had turned ; but, instead of making to come back again, It moved slowly off into the meadow. Ten or twelve yards from the water, It stooped ; slowly and as if with effort pulled Itself erect ; moved a few steps ; then gradually, legs-first, vanished. As far as mortal eyes could tell, It had, with notable leisureliness, sunk into the earth.

The process of disappearance, somehow, was more disquieting than aught that had befallen.

I had no remark to make.

John, at my elbow, sighed with relief.

The salmon leapt ; splashed about on the surface for a few seconds ; and bolted up the river.

My host was scrambling down the hillock at our back. He had caught two fish, he said, and had sent his gillie home with them. Why had I stayed there so

long? It was getting on for dinner-time. Had I had any luck?

"We're just in the holts wi' a good ane," said John, realising that I was too much engaged to be talkative.

Swish! sh-sh-sh-z.

The sound came from afar, and I trembled at the thought of what might happen next. The salmon, if he liked, could come down much more quickly than I could reel up; and by this time the hook must have worn its socket loose. . . . The anguish of that moment! Hoping to encourage the fish to keep fronting the torrent, instinctively I had slackened the strain. . . . All was well. He was coming down, but not running down; dropping down tail-first. Slowly, slowly, but with never a pause, his tether shortened; by and by he passed, and I had him against the stream. "All right now," I thought, and even said; and was speedily undeceived. If the salmon had seemed fatigued, he had been, inadvertently of course, misleading. He

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leaped, not once, but three or four times in immediate succession; he bored to the bottom and stood erect, tail-up; he dashed hither and thither, pausing only to wag his head in playfulness or rage; he came to the surface and smote it with his tail. Bismarck was unrestrained in the generosity of his compliments and exhortations.

Swish! sh-sh-sh-z. . . . Whirr-r-r!
. . . . "All right, John!" He was again, apparently, beginning the half-circular tour, and I thought I foresaw an opportunity to bring our performance to an unexpectedly early finish. The fish seemed to be in no fear of us. Time after time, at the end of one of his consecutive curves on the outside edge, he had come close to the bank, and had even paused a few seconds there; in fact, he had paused each journey. Theoretically he had almost been within reach of the gaff; but practically he had been outside. He had never, as far as, judging by the feel of things, I could make out in the

darkness, been near the surface when close to us ; it had been from the bottom of the water, eight or nine feet deep, that he had shown his leisurely contempt. I wondered, Next time he was in-shore would it be possible to persuade him, in consideration of the toil we had jointly undergone, to come half-way up? In that case, and John being prone on the bank at the port of arrival, with his gaff aslant in the water to the hilt, the episode might be brought to an event. I would try. . . . With might and main I raised the rod, and did so not in vain. Distinctly I felt him coming up, and not yet turning to go out. . . . Was this the moment to say "Now!" and let John strike on chance? What, after all, would it matter if he missed? The salmon and I would be just as we were. A jerk of the gaff against the line would be deplorable; but, as the line was vertical, there was not much risk of that. . . . "Now!" . . . John had not missed; but he was still prone. Evidently

he was in distress. "Help!" he cried: "I'm slippin' in!" My host was to the rescue promptly, and an extraordinary ongoing ensued. To the pull of the salmon John could oppose no more than his own inertia, which, as the bank was sloping, was not great. All the muscular energy he could afford to use was that which was needed in order that he might not lose hold of the violently agitated gaff. John, in short, had become part of the landing apparatus. There was Bismarck, his heels dug into the turf, his head and shoulders thrown back as if he were engaged in a tug-of-war, John's ankles in his hands!

When at length the four of us were reposing on the bank I myself at least was nearly as "far through" as the salmon.

Dinner within an hour would have been welcome; but my host did not insist on punctuality. He said that a

fresh meal could be prepared at any time. We had still to visit the house across the river. Nothing less would satisfy him. While we were resting John and I had given an account of what had happened in the early stage of the evening. That is to say, I had told the tale, and John had given evidence in corroboration. Bismarck, incredulous at the outset, was sufficiently impressed to desire acquaintance with Peter.

John protested. 'The boat, he said, besides bein' vera sma', was auld and rotten; so were the oars, which were no' even o' the same size. 'The boat was never used excep' for minnow-fishin' when the water was fallin' low. To try to cross in sic a dark nicht and wi' the water pretty high would be dangerous. It would be better to wait till the mornin'.

John did not exaggerate the defects of the boat, which, waterlogged, lay near the foot of the pool; but his warning was in vain. Bismarck was resolved to probe the mystery without delay.

Having emptied the boat by turning it keel-up, we launched it and set out ; crossed the strong flow slantingly ; and arrived at Peter's door, on which Bismarck knocked just as if he were a postman in a hurry.

Steady footsteps within were heard ; the door was opened ; and a man stood inquiringly in the narrow hall, which was lit by a lamp on either side.

"I'm tenant of the shooting and fishing across the water," said my friend, "and I have come to see you on a matter of importance."

The man in the doorway, an athletic figure of middle age and middle height, whose pleasant and alert face was instantly attractive, seemed amused.

"Tenant—only tenant ? Dear me ! You might be the Laird, or even the Factor, by the way ye speak—Don't-think-o'-arguing-wi'-me, so to say. However, come awa' in, and bring your suite."

The fellow spoke in a tone of banter which, I noticed, took Bismarck by sur-

prise. As he was leading the way through a devious passage,

“Is that Peter?” asked Bismarck, in a whisper.

“Aye: it’s himsel’, Sir,” John answered, resignedly, clearly meaning, “A wilful man must have his way” and that the way was not likely to be smooth.

The apartment in which we soon found ourselves was very unlike what could have been expected. It was lofty and otherwise spacious. A pile of coal and logs was burning brightly on an ungrated hearth, on either side of which, built into the receding wall, was a cushioned seat. Easy-chairs were ranged about the fire-place. A bookcase, packed, covered the whole of the wall on the right of the ingle-neuk; on the other side was a huge cupboard with a divided door, whence Peter had just brought a decanter filled with a purple liquor and four small tumblers, which he had placed on a little round table standing between the easy-chairs and the fire.

"Claret, gentlemen," he was saying.

Cases of stuffed birds and set-up fish, three or four stags' heads, the head of a Highland bull, bows and arrows, a flintlock gun, pistols, and other things which I could not take in at the moment, decorated the three other walls.

"I ha'e no particular objection to other wines, or even to spirits ; but I like claret for sentimental reasons, which are the only reasons that are always satisfactory. Claret is the wine that our forebears liked and thrived on."

A table in the middle of the room was strewn with daily journals, weekly reviews, and monthly magazines.

Peter had handed round the plenished tumblers.

"Gentlemen, The King !" said he ; and, still sitting, each of us raised his glass. Peter lowered his, saying,

"It is customary to rise when a toast to the King is called."

Bismarck and I arose, with conscious

lack of grace ; John, still more awkwardly, followed suit.

“Now,” said Peter, seating himself after the little ceremony, “we’ll go into this important business which gi’es me the pleasure o’ your company.” He looked at each of us, inquiringly, in turn ; his singularly straightforward blue eyes finally resting on Bismarck.

Was Bismarck as uncomfortable as myself? I hoped and believed that he was. But for him, we should never have been there. I should have liked to be there with countenance unashamed ; but we had blundered. We were aggressive fools. Peter, leaning forward, his elbows resting on his knees, paused for answer. He was master of the awkward situation. He was not at all angry ; I thought, indeed, that he was keeping amusement in restraint. However that may have been, he was indulgent. As Bismarck stayed silent for a few moments, no doubt in the process of collecting his scattered intentions, Peter resumed.

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"I'se warrant it is the business that usually brings persons o' importance to my door. Poachin'. Isn't it, noo?"

"It is," said Bismarck, eagerly I thought; I 'daresay he felt that he would be stepping farther into error if amid our highly practical circumstances he broached the subject of the Spectre and Ye Ken Wha. "Exactly. I regret to say that I suffer a good deal from the scoundrels. My partridges were short, and I've hardly any pheasants; I have a suspicion that the river is netted. It occurred to me that you, a constant resident in the district, might——"

"Quite so," said Peter, in an obliging tone. "But am I richt in takin' you to say that every poacher is a scoonerel?"

"You are," said Bismarck.

"And you mean it?"

"I do. Poaching is theft, or, at the best, robbery."

"I do a bit o' poachin' mysel'," said Peter.

"Oh?" said Bismarck, discomfited.

“Yes. Would you like to apologise?”

Bismarck did not answer immediately. He was weighing the alternatives. It was an anxious interval in the placid conversation. I expected that the determining influence would be the trait he had mentioned in the morning; and I was not wrong.

“No,” said he: “certainly not.”

His vigorous features, as he looked up, expressed resolution blent with wonder. What would Peter say now? What further rebuke should we have to suffer?

“Well,” said Peter, rising, “I like ye nane the waur for stanin’ by what ye said. But it doesna’ do to be called a scoonerel. It might lead to bein’ treated as such. We maun find a way oot o’ the difficulty. Here, John: just gi’e me a hand wi’ this table.”

The larger table having been moved into a corner, Peter took down two pairs of boxing-gloves from among the fire-arms on the wall.

“They’re very light,” he said, as he

handed a pair to Bismarck,—“in fact, the lightest.”

Bismarck took them; gently moved them up and down, one in each hand, as if in response to Peter's statement of their weight; then looked up in perplexity, saying, without words, What am I to do with them?

“Put them on, of course,” said Peter, “and your jacket off.” He had laid his own jacket aside, and was already gloved.

“But,” said Bismarck, hesitatingly, “surely it's not to be expected——”

“That you can put up your hands against a greenkeeper? Yes: that's it. It's what they a' feel in the same circumstances—my distinguished visitors. Tuts! Dinna' let sic a trifle stand between us! I'm no' a greenkeeper by nature. I'm hardly one in reality. The post is a sinecure. I hold it merely in order to account to the folks hereaboot for my bidin' in the place. It gi'es me my visible means o' subsistence. But that's nothing. What I really live on are the invisible im-

ports. These make me at least a gentleman of means. So, kind Sir, come on!"

At the close of this speech, delivered with easy arrogance modified by good-humour almost brotherly, Bismarck burst into laughter. Then he rose from the easy-chair, and took off his jacket. It was impossible to feel repelled by Peter. It was impossible to reject his challenge. We had invaded his house, and we had called him names. If he was good enough to have these attentions bestowed upon him, surely he was good enough for others, those which he had invited? Surely we were not so unworthy as to abandon our course of conduct merely because it had taken us to an unexpected turn, risky to ourselves? That was implicit in what Peter had said; but it was implicit only. The fascinating rascal had too much delicacy of taste to be raspingly plain in his speech. He was treating us with much consideration.

"Yes: come on!" said Bismarck, tapping Peter on the shoulder. Out

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shot Peter's left; but, without otherwise moving a hairbreadth, Bismarck jerked his head, and nothing happened. The rest of the round was experimental sparring. Each man was trying to discover the particular artistry in which his peril lay.

"Slow work," said Peter. "Fill the glasses, John. You'll find bottles in the cupboard."

The second round was almost as little effectual. Neither man could get at the other's face, and the blows elsewhere, hard though some of them were, seemed to be against tissue scarcely less resilient than india-rubber.

John had become excited. Having filled the glasses, he had returned to the door of the cupboard, and was standing there, near his master, uttering snatches of encouragement and of suggestion. This seemed unfair. What was I to do? I could not well stand up and take the part of my host's antagonist; but something had to be done. I requested John to take his seat and be quiet. John would

not. He seemed unable. He was, I perceived, struggling to regain the bearing which is proper to a gillie and usually an unbreakable habit; but the influence of this exceptional crisis was too strong. Besides, he had a show of reason for his attitude. "In any turn-up I've been at, Sir, a body was allowed to tak' a side."

"Silence, bantams!" said Peter. "When twa elderly gentlemen are fechtin' a' other argument is unseemly. At least, that's the rule in this ring. It has to be observed. Sit doon, baith o' ye, and hold your tongues."

"Yes, John," said the other pugilist: "sit down. And be easy. We shan't be long."

"You've a bit up your sleeve, I see," Peter remarked. "Well, so have I. Now then!"

Each made a show of being blindly violent; for a minute or so there was a great ducking and bobbing of heads, and hammering thereof. Then they slowed down, Peter walking round Bismarck,

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who revolved on his own axis, and anon Bismarck walking round Peter, who similarly watched the foe. . . . What Bismarck's error was, his back being towards me at the dramatic instant, I do not exactly know; but Peter was quick enough. Bismarck had been hit sharply under the chin, and was on his back.

"No' hurt, I hope?" said Peter, cheerily. "No, no! Just a bit tap that does nae real harm, though at the minute it feels as bad as a knock on the funny bone. I propose a short interval for refreshments."

"Refreshments certainly," said Bismarck, rising and laughing; "but I don't think we'll begin again. I'm outclassed, Peter."

"Hoot, toot! Dinna' say that at this early stage! It might just as easily be your turn next time. I saw ye tryin' for't. You're just as fine a chiel as ony I ha'e met since I was walloped by the laird frae Comrie. Dear me! that was a dooncome! He was white-haired and

auld, sae much sae that I thocht shame o' mysel', and was inclined to sue for peace; and he had long side-whiskers, and spats, and a grey frock-coat; he looked, and spoke, like a draper. But it wasna' behind a counter he had been reared. It was nae fecht at a'—just doon and up, doon and up. Nae suner had I found my feet than I found the floor. And he just smilin' and polite as a shop-walker a' the time. Aye: he was a fearsome Colonel! But you and I are a match, and the luck may be wi' you if we start afresh."

Though these remarks, as they proceeded, became manifestly heartfelt, Peter, I knew, had set out on them with intent to soften Bismarck's vexation. In this he was successful. When we were all seated round the fire again, Bismarck was in excellent spirits. He wanted to withdraw the unfortunate word, since now, having gone through the ordeal of battle on account of it, he could do so without shame; but our new friend would not hear of this.

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“We’ll keep the peace noo, I think,” said he, soothingly; “but—just fill the glasses, John, lad—apologisin’ is oot o’ the question. I never think o’ ca’in’ for’t, or allooin’ it. To tell the truth: At this stage on sic occasions I aye seem for the time to see that I mysel’ am the chief offender. O’ the twa views o’ poachin’—yours and mine—yours is the maist commonly held. There’s nae doobt o’ that.”

He paused; gazed meditatively into the fire for a few seconds; and then began again. Like his other openings, the new one was of a nature wholly unexpected.

“But it is not always the common opinion that is right,” he said, snapping the words out with an earnestness that was startling. “No: not even though it be the opinion which all persons, all parties, and all classes hold. You see,” he went on, less emphatically, “I read a good deal, and often, being a lonely man, I sit and think about what I have read; and that, no doubt for the same reason,

—loneliness—leads to notions that may strike ordinary folk as queer.” Then, thinking aloud, apparently scarce conscious of our presence, and lapsing into his habitual dialect, the extraordinary man reviewed the social polity of the time. I will not undertake to give a word-for-word report of what he said. So fresh and pungent was the commentary, I think I could almost do so; but perhaps a summary will suffice. It was certainly sad, said Peter, to think o’ the thoosands o’ men wha nooadays found it hard to mak’ a livelihood; but were we on the richt road to a remedy? If there were only scores o’ ill-aff folk, instead o’ thoosands, would the State be sayin’ to the people, “Poor, miserable wretches, what’s your wull? Just tell us, and we’ll do it. But, before speakin’, be sure you really ken how miserable you are”? No: if there were only scores o’ puir bodies, instead o’ thoosands, the State wudna’ be sayin’ that. Yet, why no’? Didna’ each lowly inseck feel a pang as great as

when a giant died? Micht there no' be as much sufferin' in a single hoose as in a mob fillin' half the streets o' London? Aye, and more; for sufferin', when it got ower being individual and private, became no' sufferin' at a', but a kind o' rejoicin'. No' seein' this, the State had lost its head. A' it was daein' in the hope o' puttin things richt was tendin' to swell the mobs that were exultin' in their woe. Waur than that: it was lowerin' the spirits even o' a' the well-doin' common folk in the country. Nae State could go on tellin' the people that they were miserable without the people becomin' so. Nothing that could be thought o'—no' even free trade in drink and intemperance a general fashion—would be sae bad as this. It was a debauchery o' the emotions and the mind. He jaloused there must noo be thoosands o' men no' earnin' onything wha could be earnin' much if they liked. But that was no' the worst o't. The worst o't was that there was a cloud o' thinkin' misery ower the land. The people

were losin' spirit. State aid was no' a' blessin'. It could never gi'e the people pluck and peace o' mind and happiness. What ga'e these things was a man's ain effort—that, and naething else. He sometimes thought that if it werena' that other countries which were possible enemies had States, we'd be better withoot a State at a'. Fause sentiment, which injured when it tried to cure, would never then get the upper hand. After a', each man for himsel' was the principle o' well-bein' and happiness.

This outbreak left us silent, and Peter fell into a reverie again. At length Bismarck, having expressed respect for the precepts we had heard, delicately indicated inability to reconcile them with Peter's practices.

“Oh!” said Peter, in his lighter voice, “I ken I'm no' exactly consistent. But I'm no' sae far oot wi' mysel' as would appear. You think that a man o' my principles should be industriously followin' an ordinary trade? How could I do

that? I shouldna' be mysel'. I should be an item in some union or other, a mite in a movin' cheese. I shouldna' like that. The organisation o' labour has raised wages, and that's guid; but it's no' a' that a real man wants. I like the guid things o' this life; but they would ha'e nae savour if they cam' to me through co-operation wi' some thoosands o' other men individually feckless and self-suppressing—self-assertive only in the lump. That's no' high-mettled enough. Self-suppression and regimentation are proper only against the King's enemies. They're glorious then. They're no' inspirin' when used for other purposes, gi'en' life a drab hue. Sociality is natural and fine. It's likin' for your freen's and respect for your kent enemies if they're strong. The very opposite o't is Socialism, which is a mak'-belief o' love and respect for a'boday, kent and unkent alike—a doonricht damned delusion. That, or onything o' the kind, I canna' endure the thought o'."

“And so,” said Bismarck, “you’re a—sort of outlaw?”

“In a manner of speakin’, yes,” Peter answered, not at all offended. “Only,” he added, chuckling, “I’ve very good antecedents. I’m no’ what ye can ca’ a working man by nature. Neither were the ancestors o’ ony o’ the nobles in this bonnie country. They just took what they wanted, withoot sayin’ ‘By your leave’ to onybody. And so——”

“Oh, Peter, Peter,” Bismarck interrupted, in a disappointed tone, “don’t say it—it’s just common Radicalism!”

“I hope to heaven it’s no’ that!” Peter answered, with equal fervour. “But I’ll tell you, and then you will judge for yoursel’. What I was goin’ to say is that an estate in land is no’ like a fortune made by industry. It was to begin wi’ seized and set apart by force. It has never acquired the same moral title as a fortune made in honest business has. That is why poachin’ is no’ so bad as other kinds o’ theft. In fact, I canna’

see it to be theft at a'. If I did, I would drop it. I ha'e my ain wants, which are unco expensive, and, like other folk, I ha'e lame dogs to be helpit ower a stile. I need aboot three hundred pounds a-year, and I mak' maist o't by poachin'. It's no' very muckle when levied on a wide district. But I wouldna' levy it if I thocht poachin' essentially wrang. It appears to me no' unfair as between man and man. And it's no' only mysel' that has that view. I'm as weel respectit by a' I have to do wi' as Claverhooze was by the Duke o' Argyll and other Whigamores."

Peter laughed complacently.

"You see," he went on, "the lairds and I are on a footin' o' equality. They ha'e something unusual—titles of nobility or what-not—that gi'es them privilege against the ordinar' run o' people; and so ha'e I."

"What is that, Peter?" asked Bismarck, greatly interested.

"I've often wondered," Peter answered, ingenuously. "A' I ken aboot it is that

on moors and in forests and on rivers whaur poachers are constantly bein' caught I mysel' go at large withoot bein' interfered wi'. Neither gamekeepers nor police ever meddle wi' me. Sometimes, in fact, they ask me, on the sly like, when I'm to be at some particular place, meanin' that they want to be sure o' no' bein' there themsel's. Ower and ower again they've tell't me that they winna' fa' oot wi' me if they can help it. That's been the way o't whaurever I've been—in a' parts o' the coonty o' Inverness and twa in this. Ah, bonnie Inverness!" He sighed in retrospect.

"Why did you leave, Peter?" Bismarck asked.

"Leave?" Peter echoed, his thoughts coming slowly back to the present time. "Because I had made too many freen's."

"Too convivial, perhaps?"

"No, no," Peter answered, gravely: "there was naething o' that sort intil't—at least, naething by-ordinar'. I left because I had been obliged to become

freen's wi' a' the lairds in the coonty. Whaurever I settle, a' the gamekeepers, as I ha'e mentioned, gi'e me a wide berth ; but that's no' the way wi' the lairds. Ane by ane, they call upon me, and in course o' time they've a' called ; or if a few haven't their sporting tenants have. That's what mak's me move on and be a sort o' hameless wanderer ower the Hielands."

We were still puzzled.

"Don't you see?" said Peter, his gaze moving from one to the other in astonishment. "How could you expec' me to poach ony mair on your ain place—land or water—after the proceedin's o' this nicht? We've had a bit fecht and are freen's noo. After I've had a blaw-oot wi' a man—whether I've licked him or he has lickit me—I never again go helpin' mysel' in his preserves. I focht my way into the freendship o' a' Inverness, and so oot o' the coonty. I've done the same in ae fine wide district in Perthshire, and ye ken yoursel' that the same thing's gradually happenin' here."

Bismarck began to laugh ; but Peter, who had been speaking in a simple matter-of-fact tone, though a little sadly, looked at him with an expression which put a check on mirth.

“Pardon me,” said my friend, softly ; and fell silent.

“Tut, tut !” exclaimed Peter, as if suddenly conscious that the spirits of the company had drooped, and rising lithely from his chair. “The glasses, John—fill up ! We’ll have a song.”

“Words and music by mysel’,” he said, having tuned his violin, which he had fetched from a corner of the room. “They cam’ into my head a minute ago. No’ grand opera, ye ken ; but a’ richt in spirit, I think. Ilka verse carries its ain chorus—the last twa lines.”

Then he sang to a lilting air :

*O bonnie is the August day
As any day in Spring
When o’er the heather, brae to brae,
The young grouse take the wing !*

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*And bonnie the September time,
Calm sparklin' in the sun,
When through the stubble, tipped wi' rime,
The perky paitricks run.*

*When doon the hillside creeps the snow
And snell has grown the air
'Tis fine to leave the plains and go
To seek the mountain hare.*

*And finer still if luck attend
Your footsteps up the wind
And into easy range should send
A muckle hart or hind!*

*Aye: that's a' grand; but what's the gun
Compared wi' rod and reel
When from the North Sea comes a run
O' salmon and o' peel?*

Peter's voice, light, confident, defiantly joyous, instantly caught us as with a charm, and held us so. The first chorus was by no means shy; the last was a roar of immeasurable glee.

The enchanting knave was absolute.

"Well," he said, when we had rested for a minute or so, "the nicht's wearin' on, and ye maun be hungry. I had my ain supper just before you cam' in. Could you do wi' cold grouse?"

Gladly could we have done with that, or with any other fare, had a meal there and then been a thing desired; but eating would have been too prosaic at that moment. No, no: we must be going.

"At ony rate, you canna' go empty-handed," said Peter. "That wouldna' be lucky. Ootby I ha'e something that will please you. Come and see."

When we were again in the open air and aside from the light cast into it from the doorway, there was the Spectre! It had taken the arm of Bismarck, and was leading him across the meadow within the square of oaks. John and I were close at their heels. "I see I'm in a lowe," the Spectre was saying, in the unmistakable voice of Peter. "My fishin' claes—I wear them when I've a

netfu' to carry to the railway station—are smeared wi'—what d'ye ca' it?—phosphorus, I think, and shine. I put them on at sunset, thinkin' that the water would be doon enough thi' nicht for an hour or so with the leister. Excuse me. They're no' dirty—only glowin'. They're very usefu' at the leisterin'—savin' me frae troublin' wi' a torch, which splashes a body wi' pitch. I've only to bend ower the bow o' the boat, and there, in a jiffy, are the salmon! But the fish I'm going to show you, hoping you'll accept it, was no' ta'en that way. I took it on a flee this morning, just after daybreak. Fair sport."

Here the speech stopped. So did Peter himself. He bent down; moved a hand about upon the turf; found an iron ring; pulled; and raised a trap-door.

"No' a bad arrangement this," he said. "Nae doobt when you've been fishin' on the bank opposite you've noticed the mouth of the big culvert on this side.

The covered-in burn has never less than three feet o' water unless the Earn is very low. Thocht I to mysel' when I took up my abode here, 'This is the very place for my coble. Naebody will ever think that there's a boat up the burn, and I'll no' be troubled wi' questions as to what I need a boat for.' So I stripped off a square o' the turf, cut a hole in the roof o' the culvert, and put this trap-door doon—wi' the turf on, as you see."

"Neat," Bismarck remarked.

"Aye: so it is, if I may say so. And I've another o' the same roond the bend, behind the hoose. I thocht it might be usefu' in case there should be need for a mysterious disappearance. At the side o' the other trap-door I pulled doon a slap o' the wall o' the culvert, and made a bay big enough to hold the boat, which naebody would be likely to notice in the dark. So if ony folk, seein' the boat enterin' the mouth o' the burn, followed in pursuit, they would no' be likely to find it. They would soon come doon again,

and if they thoct it was mysel' they had seen in the boat they micht come into the hoose to spier, and there they would find me at the peacefu' fireside, studyin' the affairs o' the day."

With a merry laugh Peter took a step down; and down, down, down he went. Just thus had the Spectre disappeared.

"Follow, gentlemen," said Peter, "mindin' the steps—they're slippery."

The steps, seemingly fixed somehow against the wall, were very narrow, not more than a foot in width.

"I can lift them aff, and put them into the coble, and then there's no trace at a'," said Peter.

We were in the boat by this time; and what happened in the darkness I could gather only from what Peter was saying.

"Ah, yes: here he is! At least thirty pund, I'm sure, and clean-run—I wunna' wonder if he had still the sea-lice on him. Steady, now. Keep your hands inside the coble. They micht scrape against the wall."

He was punting us down the culvert. Soon we were on the river, and soon on the other side. Peter had told us not to bother about our boat. It could lie where it was all night; he would take it over in the morning.

“Well done, well done!” he exclaimed, when he had peered down upon our own salmon, lying among the bracken. “I heard splashin’s and the reel, and kent some o’ you was playin’ a fish; but I had no thocht that it was sic a fish as that! Mine’s sma’ compared wi’t. But keep it—keep it! Maybe you’ve no’ yet overta’en a’ the freen’s you would like to send salmon to. It may help you in that way.”

Cheerily wishing us good-night, Peter returned to his boat. We watched him as he shot luminous across the river, singing :

*When from the North Sea comes a run
O’ salmon and o’ peel.*



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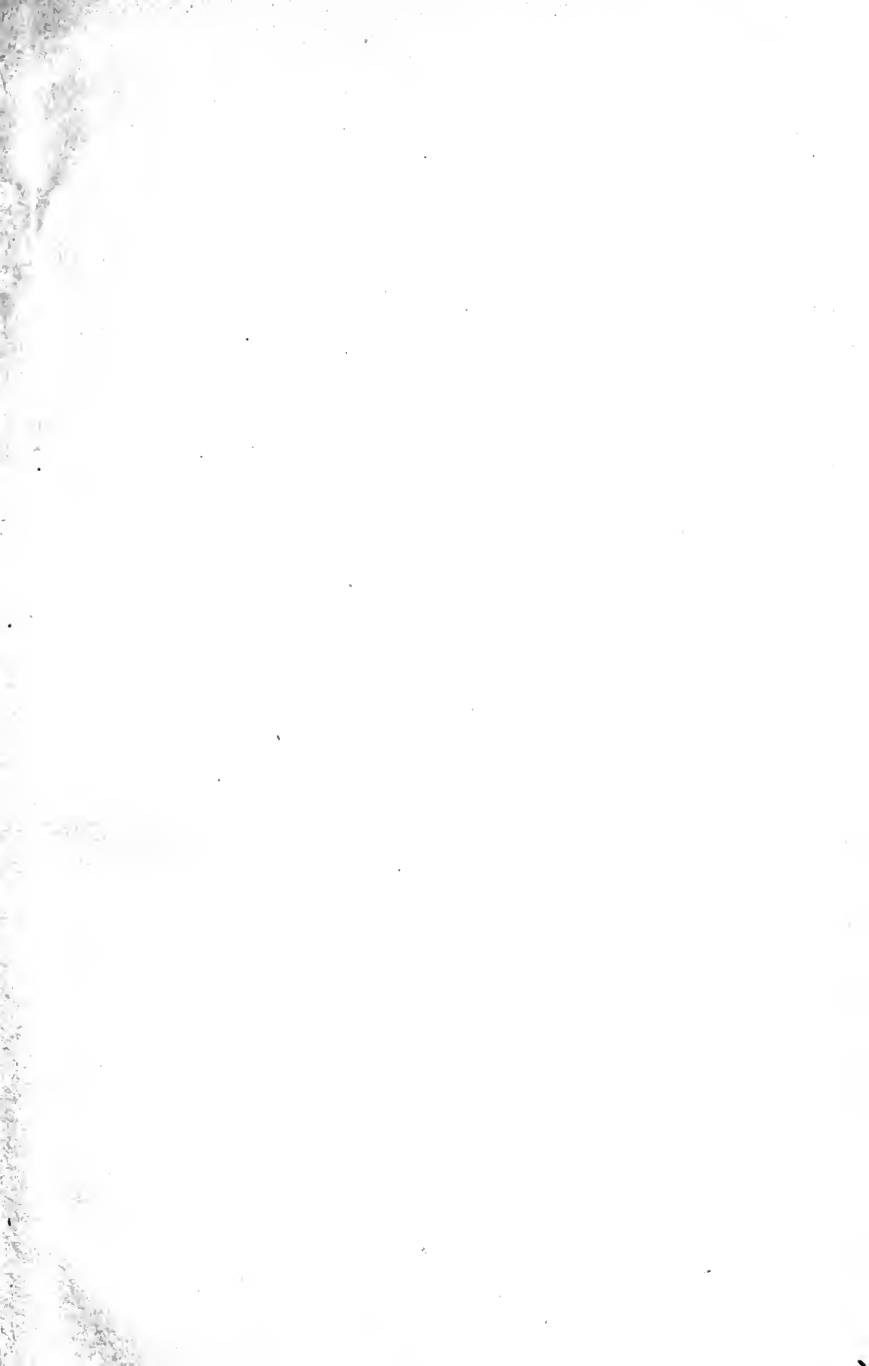
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